Organizational stress in social work: a cross-cultural study

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ORGANIZATIONAL STRESS IN SOCIAL WORK: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

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SUMMARY

This is a study of organizational factors producing stress as perceived by workers in a local authority Social Services Department in northern England and a State social work agency in a southern American state.

The research methods included the use of personal interviews followed by a self-administered questionnaire and incident sheets, and of group discussions. The study identifies the socio-political context within which the two agencies operated.

I took an interactional view which focuses on the dynamics of the interplay between the individual and his environment. The term 'stress' was found to be a useful heuristic device, but not a useful analytic tool because the quagmire of confusion which surrounds its use. While it is little more than a catch-all phrase to describe a miscellany of distressing feelings it opened up avenues to understanding what was happening in the agencies to produce the distress, despondency and impaired performance revealed.

The most pervasive and debilitating organizational stressors perceived by the staff were found to be work overload, lack of organizational social support, and lack of participation in decision-making. These factors were seen to be exacerbated by lack of resources and by current political policies.

The defences adopted by staff to the many conflicts and dilemmas they face are contained within the agency in ways that produce mutual recrimination and are destructive to professional and managerial performance.

The major possibility of dealing with this situation is the development of good supervisory support systems. It is suggested that schools of social work could make a contribution.

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Chapter 1.
INTRODUCTION

Stress is a frequent experience for those employed in the social services today. The individual social worker, practitioner or manager, who experiences prolonged stress may well suffer physical and emotional disturbances which can impair his or her capacity to respond to the needs of clients and colleagues.

Social services workers in Britain and America, especially those in the public sector social services, view most of the stress generated by their organizations as unnecessary and over-shadowing while exacerbating client-related stress - seen as an inevitable integral part of a raison d'etre.

There is an increasing concern among public social services, managers and practitioners, on both sides of the Atlantic about the growing levels of work stress caused by their monolithic employing agencies established in the early seventies. Equally worrying is their feeling that stress prevention and alleviation is beyond their control because their agencies are seen as having done little, since their inception, to help them manage stressful work experiences.

Many seasoned public social services workers readily acknowledge that they had to cope with work-related stresses when employed in smaller agencies but maintain that these were greatly aggravated when they were absorbed into the present social services conglomerates.

From the outset of the new social services organizations well over a decade ago, both in Britain and America, the view was clearly voiced that effective management of these organizations would require public management and planning skills to ensure the cost-effective running of such large labour-intensive organizations.

Most of the managers' appointments were drawn from staff in the smaller agencies that had been absorbed into the new organizations, many of whom had little, if any, exposure to formal public management training.

The British Seebohm social services departments failed to anticipate the training needs of their newly amassed managerial population. It was the Seebohm Committee (1968), a government-appointed committee whose recommendations led to the enactment of the Local Authority Social Services Act (1970), which created the unified social services departments. While there was advanced notice of the Seebohm reorganization, there was little done by colleges and management schools to accommodate the knowledge and skill requirements of personal social services managers. As courses began to materialize, with a few exceptions, most were inclined to draw upon industrial/commercial concepts and practice with little attempt to accommodate the idiosyncratic personal social services environments (Patti 1983 p.19).

The establishment of social services or public sector management training courses by a few colleges or management schools in Britain was negligible, but more so in the States. As a result, there has not been a significant increase in the number of trained managers into the social services system where they continue to rely mainly on a "hands on learning" management.

The past and continuing failure on both sides of the Atlantic to develop a well-trained professional managerial social services work force is thought by many within, and observers of, the social work scene, to be a significant contributor to the high levels of stress at all levels in many public social services organizations.

Work experience and influence on the research

When I first began to practice as a psychiatric social worker in my mid-twenties, I recall having much enthusiasm and a strong commitment to my chosen career. I also remember the underlying anxieties at the time. Firstly, during my social work course I was told that Florence Hollis, a revered American social worker, had said that to become a mature and proficient professional would take 5-6 years following training. And that, I was reminded, depends very much on the quality of supervision I received during my first few years of practice. Secondly, I was concerned how I would be received into the community mental health agency by established social workers, notwithstanding any newcomers like myself. A majority of the workers were untrained but had been in the agency for several years "qualified by experience" all trained newcomers were frequently reminded. Would the supervision I had been promised in my interview reach my expectation? How would I cope with the reality of practice without the close educative and supportive supervision received during training?

During my first year to so I maintained a high level of investment in my work. The fact the supervision was only a rare event was not bothersome to me at the time. But as I began to experience stress due to increasing workload, causing me to feel overwhelmed, I began to understand and identify with colleagues who had been complaining of being long overburdened. My supervisory support, as it was for others, was usually restricted to case allocation issues with the occasional one line question "Things ok?" Often when I indicated otherwise, the supervisor being short of time and having assured himself things were not in crisis, would offer a quick-fix solution or arrange a future meeting by which time my difficulties had diminished or gotton worse. We were told to use "your discretion" which added to our tensions because we never quite knew where its limits lay until or if we made a mistake. At times I found it almost unbelievable that the work got done as well as it did with the dissatisfaction among practitioners as well as supervisors and managers.

The small management group were easily accessible. There were times when the level of affability between them and other staff was highly positive which helped prevent and mitigate damaging consequences of both staff and service delivery problems. Whatever, the expectations of management seemed overdemanding, and emphasis appeared to be on case numbers and visits to demonstrate quantitatively to the local authority mental health committee that staff were productive. A constant concern with management was ensuring that mistakes were kept to a minimum; avoiding embarrassing the agency took precedence over the client and staff needs.

There were frequent bitching or tension-releasing sessions which ranged from the occasional self-dialogue in the enclosed lavatory to the occasional spontaneous office outburst when a colleague was seen to have been unjustly treated by management or had an upsetting encounter with a difficult client. Very strong feelings were ventilated through some rather standard cliches like: "the bloody bureaucracy," "doing society's dirty work," and "just keep the mad off the streets and that's all the (public and politicians) care. There were times when the level of frustration would reach a pitch that colleagues would become overwrought or oversensitive with one another and argue, sometimes not speaking to each other for several days. Tension and stress reactions were not always dealt with captiously. There were occasions when outbreaks of spontaneous and contrived sardonic humour and slapstick helped dilute and ease tension or defuse some pending or actual serious collegial disagreement.

Some colleagues, including managers, talked about their physical symptoms which they associated with overtiredness or general debilitation, probably masking a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. Periodically, a manager would share his frustration about some political decision which he viewed as disadvantaging the agency. If the incident was sufficiently poignant to practitioners, an animated supportive discussion would take place which serves as a reminder that even managers needed support.

After about two years, my spirited spontaneity began to give way to an increasing sense of disenchantment with the job which was validated by other younger workers who were having similar feelings. realizing that my supervisor was not able to give me the supervision needed, without the agency's aproval and knowing that it would not condone what I intended, I arranged for regular confidential consultative sessions with a very competent senior supervisor in another social service agency. This arrangement worked very well, enhancing my competence and regenerating self-confidence.

I eventually left the agency for pastures anew in a child and family centre as a principal practitioner. For the two years I was there, there were stressful times but not on a scale I had previously experienced. The feelings of excessive tiredness and alientation began to disappear. I even had the energy for a social work masters programme at a nearby university which was to take me into social work education.

I left the agency for teaching in 1970. It was when I was teaching social work students in the early 1970s, I began to explore the bewildering phenomena of job stress and its end product, burnout, which at the time I didn't have a name for. Quite regularly in group tutorials, students (particularly those in the public sector personal services) would talk about the "pressures" and "stresses" on their practice supervisors and other workers in the agencies in which they were doing their practice placements. (From the mid 1970s the evocative term burnout to describe the outcome of chronic stress, ie. the severe emotional and physical deterioration of workers, became part of students' vocabulary). Their accounts of severe overwork, poor accommodation, excesses of organizational rigidity and agency tensions between practitioners and those in the management hierarchy took me back to my practitioner days in the early sixties before the Seebohm reorganization.

Of course, as a past practitioner in a community mental welfare agency, I was familiar with the feelings accompanying pressure and stress. I had an understanding of these reactions based on my own social work training as a psychiatric and medical social worker. However, as a practioner, although I applied my learning to working through client-related stress, it was not until sometime after I began practice that I began to use such knowledge to try and alleviate agency-induced stress. Why? On reflection, because I was so new to social work, I was wrapped up in the complex and legitimate naivety of idealism believing that I could "roll with the punches" with no ill effects. But I had soon discovered otherwise.

I had maintained sufficient current contact with practitioners and managers to realize that many of the stresses prevalent in the smaller piece-meal agencies prior to the Seebohm Report (1986) had been exacerbated by the consolidation of those agencies into one single large social services department.

In 1980, I returned to a social services department as a senior manager. I was determined to try to keep stress levels as low as possible for both my staff and myself. In addition, I wanted to demonstrate the value to both staff and management of consultation and peer support groups. My efforts brought little success. Top management and the majority of managers at other managerial levels including a number of my own managers were not very supportive of my aspirations. Those few of us with like minds in management positions who tried to work through the system to gradually introduce a more supportive and participative management style within our own managerial environments accomplished negligible results at some discomfort to ourselves.

Management, primarily senior and middle management, tended to humour our views. In my case, they claimed I had "never left my academic ivory tower." Management (especially the director) and large sections of staff, including union, were reluctant to look at the department's climate often for opposing reasons colluding to subvert attempts to establish a mutual supportive accountability system.

Generally, relations between managers and practitioners were badly flawed. Tension and stress were high, accompanied by low trust levels which prevented the generating of sufficient goodwill to negotiate or develop workable remedies. For the new employees this situation was not always easy to sense due to the well-veneered affability which soon dissolved once one was established in post.

After just a brief time, I became aware of a number of colleagues and other staff at various levels, from the deputy director to direct service staff who were highly stressed with a fair number who were within burnout. Some were little more than psychological shadows of their former selves. A few openly admitted of having been in the spiritual doldrums for several years. They were usually very fatigued and irritated, and expressed disillusionment with their jobs. In addition, they would openly deride both their managers and subordinates with little concern for the consequences. A few complained that the director had finished their careers because they had opposed his "pet projects" which were aimed more at elevating his own self-esteem than the betterment of clients or staff.

A small number would seek to conceal their loss of idealism and commitment. They would tend to anaesthetize their distress by throwing themselves into overwork and manifest psychosomatic symptoms often associated with chronic stress. There were others who were burning out who had "retired on the job" and tried to disguise this by maintaining a veneer of professional commitment based more on philosophical statements than meaningful activity.

Occasionally, a burned-out older worker would bare, by the process of dramatic vignettes, his impaired emotional state as if it was a battle scar which should elevate him to some venerated position. This had a worrying impact on some new younger workers still somewhat bewildered, if not stressed, by their exposure to work overload, resource shortage and a defective support system causing some to claim they felt like displaced persons.

Not surprisingly, the agency, which was rife with discontent, exhaustion and depersonalization, suffered severely from low morale and lack of trust. This reflected the chronic smouldering problem of burnout and various levels of destructive stress which was primarily a function of the way the organization operated. Management at the senior levels were well aware of the problem. The willingness to tackle the problem by some managers, especially at a lower level was undermined by others who were themselves experiencing chronic work stress and by top management whom I believe dared not risk the consequences of formally acknowledging the problems. To do so would have been to open a Pandora's box which could result in a system-wide disruption and breakdown.

While there were field practitioners who among themselves admitted the existence of long-term stress reactions and burnout, they were usually hesitant to admit such feelings to managers above their supervisors. There were those managers who were more likely than others to interpret social workers' anxieties and their consequences as reflecting personal inadequacies rather than the likelihood of organizational deficiencies.

A job I came into with enthusiasm, and certainly without the rose coloured classes of my early practice days, began to lose its sparkle for me after the third year. Having shared my sense of frustration about "the system" with a colleague, he remarked "welcome to the real world" implying that my teaching had more than a tinge of unreality. His somewhat cynical remark was reflective of

many at the middle and senior management level who were highly stressed, and some who I saw as burning out. I recall at the time that my annoyance with him and the realization that I was in the early states of burnout spurred me to try to understand what were the organizational pressures impacting on me and similar others. I realized I could have consulted the literature and those versed in stress management, but I wanted to pursue it through my own study, one that would allow me to have as much direct access as possible with public personal social services practitioners' and managers' feelings and views regarding those organizational factors that could lead to burnout.

The research process

Having shared my thinking with several colleagues and friends, some of whom were in school teaching and nursing and who were experiencing or had observed others with similar feelings to mine, I was encouraged to pursue my interest in research. I recall at the time being warned by medical colleagues that researching at any area of human stress including burnout would be like walking in a quagmire and suggesting I select a less perplexing subject! Ignoring their advice and having got the support of my boss, who I recall wondered if I was having some kind of mental aberration, I approached the University of Bath School of Management in 1984 to do my study within their doctoral programme.

Following consultations with my supervisor I started the process of refining the shape of my approach to the study. I would carry out a comparative study of field work practitioners and managers in two social services departments. In my search for two agencies which would not include my own, I was assisted by a Regional Social Work Inspectorate officer who agreed to help me find two study agencies and possibly some funding. He cautioned me that my research topic, while highly pertinent, might be too sensitive an issue for some social services departments and access might take some negotiating. Concurrent with looking for sites I began

examining the literature on burnout and was swiftly reminded of my medical colleagues earlier caution. It was as I had suspected that few formal studies had been done on incidence, trends and characteristics of burnout. What had been undertaken was mainly American (Stout and Williams 1983 and Perlman and Hartman 1982). My readings included work on burnout by Christina Maslach who had looked at a number of human service professionals including social workers. I was attracted to her Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1981) which contained a twenty-two item measure for identifying burnout among human services workers. The inventory viewed burnout as a continous variable ranging from low to high depending on the magnitude of scores on frequency and intensity of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment. It could be self-administered in 30 minutes.

I decided to carry out my pilot study using the MBI and a questionnaire of my own construction but influenced by the work of Levinson (1981). It comprised 40 questions, 9 related to gathering demographic data about respondents. Twenty-nine were closed with structured response alternatives somewhat similar to 'cafeteria' type scales (True 1983). Two questions were open-ended. Time for completion was approximately 30-40 minutes.

My pilot study involved 14 of 20 fieldwork staff of mixed sex and positions from my own social services department, whom I invited to take part. They were told that I was designing data collecting instruments for a project which was aimed at increasing understanding of social services working environments.

Responses to the questionnaire overall were positive, but the MBI was not received with enthusiasm. At the end of the MBI I inserted a statement inviting respondents' comments. The majority of them dismissed the instrument as being weighted to assume that the respondent was suffering from burnout and to ensure respondents would feed me with what I wanted - confirmation of burnout.

Following the completion of the pilot study, several of the respondents who felt so negative about the MBI agreed to see me individually. All remained negative, thought sympathetic to my research aim. They repeated that the research should focus on remedying the causes of stress rather than the outcome of chronic stress. As one individual expressed succinctly "... bother with the living stressed, not the burned-out dead. They're finished". He went on to voice his concerns that many young workers needed protection from an organization that would survive at the expense of the people who wanted to serve it well.

This response supported my own increasing doubts about whether or not I was looking at the wrong end of the stress continuum. The more I discussed with my supervisor and other doctoral candidates in group tutorials and dialogued with my various colleagues, I answered my own question: Should I not look at where burnout begins with chronic stress rather than the end product? My answer caused me to change the focus of my research. I would look at how social service practitioners felt about those agency factors that they viewed as causing them stress.

Owing to the sudden death of the Social Services Inspector in late 1985 who was in the early stages of exploring study sites I virtually had to begin the process over again. He had liked my change of focus to stress. His involvement in the search for sites, which ranged over the north of England, in addition to facilating access to agencies, was especially necessary due to the possibility of some funding.

At around this time my personal circumstances were becoming fluid in that I would soon be making a decision to either live in the States or remain in Britain. So it was necessary for me to finally decide with the help of my supervisor the direction of my study. Having been influenced by the works of Cherniss (1980b), Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) and Maslach (1976), I decided if I remained Britain I wanted to explore the possibility of undertaking

a comparative study involving social workers, nurses and teachers. Should I be off to America my curiosity would lead me to decide to do a comparison between British and American public personal social services workers feelings about organizational stress. To my knowledge no similar study had been undertaken. I also recognized that in such a study the influence of culture and politics would be evident and I wanted to see what these would be.

My decision to move to America settled the course of my research. I needed one social services department. To give me some kind of choice, I approached senior staff of the field services sections of two social services departments which were within easy travelling distance of my home in the north of England. Both were interested, acknowledging the desirability of good staff relations. The senior manager of the agency I choose was willing, if apprehensively so. The senior manager of the department I rejected was content with the use of questionnaires but was most uneasy about the face to face interviews I wanted to undertake. He was unable to state his reasons for concern other than to mention logistics, e.g. availability of staff, and interviewing schedule difficulties. I suspected his apprehension had more to do with the considerable staff discontent that was known to exist in his agency. The style of interviewing I wanted to do would plumb the feelings of staff and he was anxious about the possible repercussions following the ventilation of these.

Having recovered partially from the 'culture shock' of beginning a new phase of my life in a large city located in an American southeastern state I launched into finding a study site as similar as possible to the British social services department's Fieldwork Services Division. This fragment of the story will be developed further in Chapter 5.

Organization of the thesis

Part I continues with an examination of the literature that contributed to my understanding of stress (and burnout) and of the relation of stress to the work organization, concluding with a discussion of external forces affecting social work agencies.

Part II identifies and discusses the process for negotiating access to the study agencies, design and procedures for the study, the procedures for the collection of data and analysis of the data.

Part III presents the findings from the field studies.

Part VI presents the analysis of the findings and conclusions drawn from them. Attention is drawn to the commonalties of and differences between the two agencies.

Chapter 2
BURNOUT AND STRESS IN THE LITERATURE

BURNOUT

This chapter begins with reference to the burnout literature explored before changing the focus of my study to stress. It identifies those sources which furthered my appreciation of the topic and the study. Although the change of research direction required emphasis on stress literature, the interrelationship between stress and burnout inevitably meant that burnout remained a familiar concept through the study.

Herbert J. Freudenberger (1974), an American psychologist and active member of the free clinic movement, first applied the concept of burnout to the human services and introduced it to the professional literature in the early 1970s. It became an evocative catchword among those in the helping professions, which was its original focus.

A result of the increasing popularity of burnout studies in the human services since the early seventies has been the development of an array of definitions including the construction of models for measuring the process (Stout & Williams 1983). Maslach, Jones and Pines measure various facets of burnout, a phenomenon of which, according to the literature, there are more than 50 signs associated. However, many of the consequential studies and writings emanate from America and "... has scarcely been felt in English social work literature, even if its existence is widespread amongst practicing social workers" (Rushton 1985, p. 177)

A leading researcher in burnout studies, Christine Maslach (Maslach 1982), identifies over fifteen working definitions. From these definitions, she has extrapolated her definition of burnout as a reaction to a job-related situation, marked by a chronic physical

and mental exhaustion accompanied by a state of helplessness and hopelessness. There is an emotional detachment accompanied by a negativeness toward self, others, work and life in general: depression.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson 1981) is one inventory which has attracted a good deal of application attention (Goelembiewski, Munzenrider and Carter (1983); Leiter and Meechan (1986) and Jones and DuBois (1987) This instrument views burnout as a continuous variable ranging from low to high on the magnitude of scores on frequency and intensity dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment.

This description relates to Selye's (1976a) general adaptation syndrome which identifies three phases of stress reaction - alarm, resistance and exhaustion.

Most studies of the phenomenon have focused on occupational situations. Job related stress does not have a single stimulus. It consists of complex interrelated stimuli of objects, emotions and personal interactions. This means that a stimulus might provoke a stress response in one individual and may not do so in another. While this suggests that the identification and remediation of stress could be found in individual diagnosis, there are a number of basic external factors commonly associated with burnout, a result of chronic stress (Maslach & Jackson 1981).

Burnout, however, shortly after its appearance in the professional literature, ceased to be the exclusive concern of the traditional helping or caring professions and quickly expanded beyond them to a variety of other 'people centered' occupations such as ministers, dentists, prison workers, lawyers, policemen, veterinarians, corporate managers and executives, air traffic controllers and engineers.

A further broadening of the burnout perspective is identified by Farber (1983) in his discussion of the parameters of the burnout syndrome. He comments that "..... Freudenberger and Richelson (1980) talk of people burning out in relationships, Edelwich and Brodsky (1980, p. 13) refer to burnout in artists and lovers, and Chance (1981) extends the concept to include runners." This rather expansive view of the phenomenon does give some credence to those like Thompson (1980) who write that "it is clear from the literature of many fields that burnout (or syndromes which sound very much like it) are ubiquitous in our highly organized and organizational culture."

From its conceptual inception, burnout attracted a considerable media coverage which usually oversimplified its symptomology and prescription for "cure." The popular press, often in the interest of both reader comprehension and drama, have undermined the credibility of the phenomenon by a too simplistic interpretation of its complex nature. More so in the States than in Britain, there have been professionals and non-professionals from a variety of human services and other settings who wittingly or unwittingly have themselves impaired the credibility of the burnout phenomenon. They have designed opportunistic "supermarket" packages for dealing with burnout, been involved in naive consultative projects and written 'pop psychology' papers. By doing so they have underplayed the consequences of an intricate concept that still requires much more definitional and investigative work. Certainly there are a host of beneficial stress management programmes in evidence on both sides of the Atlantic, but when one is reminded by Brill (1984) that "there are well over 200 theories in use and an equivalent number of different therapeutic interventions, ranging from meditation to primal scream, medication to psychoanalysis, and network therapy to neurolinguistic programming," it is not difficult to realize that reservation must be applied to any claim that there is any one strategy or group of strategies as the most desirable for averting burnout.

A consequence of the lack of a rigorous approach to burnout by some have in part been responsible for critical comment from the professional and popular press. Lance Morrow, in a 1981 Time Magazine editorial "The Burnout of Almost Everybody," perhaps is representative of many skeptics of the phenomenon. He saw burnout as being uniquely American, a "hypochondria of the spirit" and suggested it had become a legitimate means of absolving one from personal failure. Furthermore, Morrow argued that "the biggest difficulties with the concept of burnout is that it has become faddish and indiscriminate, an item of psychobabble."

MacBride (1983) in his paper for Canada's Mental Health writes "It is difficult to pick up a newspaper or magazine these days without being confronted by at least one article on the topic of burnout. However, these articles frequently contain misleading and even dangerous myths about job stress and burnout." Farber (1983) and MacBride (1983) express their concern about the extent the mass media has reduced burnout to the level of 'pop psychology.' Sarason (1980) has his disquiets about the use of burnout. "Some use it as an excuse, some as a badge of honor, and others as a negative symptom of our times and a fast-changing society. Like so many other catch phrases it encapsulates a kernel of truth wrapped in attractive language" (p. vii). While Cherniss (1980a) holds similar thoughts, he advises: "It would be unfortunate if those interested in improving the human services dismissed the subject simply because it has become so popularized. It is a common reaction to job stress and it reduces the motivation and effectiveness of many human service providers. Burnout also is a complex, social psychological phenomenon that deserves more serious study."

In their exploration of the burnout process in the helping professions, Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) identified several work structural factors that could result from persistent high stress and lead to burnout such as overwork, excessive paper work, powerlessness, training deficiencies and lack of support. From

their observation of the burnout process they identified a five stage system: idealistic enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration, apathy and intervention. The last phase refers the attempts to break out of the burnout cycle. The same basic classification is used by Matteson and Ivancevich (1987), with a slight variation in terminology.

Maslach (1976), Shinn, Rosario, Morch and Chestnut (1984), Hvinden (1984), Gibson et al. (1989) suggest from their studies that public sector professionals, like social workers, are particularly vulnerable to burnout. Patrick (1984) also views helping professions like social workers as having a high potential for burnout. The very knowledge, skills and professional values that social workers use to help their clients can, especially when applied uncritically, undermine their own well being leading to burnout. Social workers have a reputation for taking on an attitude that they are often personally responsible for failures and difficulties in their work. There are workers who fear revealing their problematic cases, lest they be seen as failures themselves. "The person who rigidly adheres to a self-image of self-suffering in all things may program himself or herself for burnout" (Patrick 1984, p. 28). Public sector social workers in organizational terms tend generally to comprise three main work groups: (1) practitioners, (2) supervisors and (3) managers. Their work necessitates acceptance of responsibility for many types of people who experience a wide range of social, economic, physical and emotional problems and who may themselves be in burnout.

Much of the literature on burnout related to the helping professions is certainly worthy in spite of a repetitiousness of focus. There is, however, an impression given that the large majority of social workers are or will become burned out. Fineman (1985) cautions "...few studies provide a sense of perspective on the incidence of burnout, and those that do show that it is confined to a modest proportion, 11 percent or less (Pines and Kafry, 1978; Streepy, 1981)."

Whatever the consensus and dissentions in the professional literature about the conceptualization and causative factors of burnout, many care-giving professionals, such as social workers, believed that they had found a syndrome that represented behavioral experiences to which they could relate. Here was a concept to help them make sense of or rationalize bewildering emotional and/or physical symptoms which they experienced frequently in their work environments. Human service workers felt they could now legitimate their experiences of work stress, as many had kept silent about it for fear of being labeled "weak", "thin-skinned," "unrealistic idealists" or "incompetent".

STRESS

While it is understood that stress can be a positive stimulus for creativity and productivity in the work environment, this study will look at the deleterious effects of stress experienced by the social services worker. Since Hans Selye (1956 and 1976), endocrinologist and stress researcher, first developed theories of stress, there has been an expanding body of knowledge on the subject. Anderson (1978, p. 12) comments that with the ensuing proliferation of literature has come much debate about the definition of stress, its origins and consequences. As Beehr and Bhagat maintain (1985, p. 6). "Nevertheless, the general concept of stress as a real phenomenon is widely accepted..... by various experts in the field."

Definition of stress

Researchers tend to define stress in terms of three principal categories: situation or stimulus-oriented, response-oriented, or organism-environment interaction with which I identify. All three approaches conceive of stress in terms of environmental demands and consequences but choose to emphasize differently.

Situation-oriented researchers define stress through environmental demands or stresses acting upon a person causing a strain response and the emphasis is put on analyzing the environmental causes of stress rather than the individual's reaction. Kahn (1978) studied situation anxiety, looking at the sequence of events making demands on the individual. The research of Ploeger, Speilberger and Sarrason (1977) on workers trapped in a mine is an example of this approach. Stress is seen as an external event. Derogates (1982) mentions efforts to try to develop tools that will measure cumulative environmental stress. This approach has proved inadequate in that environmental characteristics alone cannot predict an individual's response. Two people can respond quite differently to the same amount of stress.

Response-oriented theory, which generally defines stress as the physiological or psychological reaction a person makes to an environmental stressor, (Ivancevich and Matteson 1980, p. 7) was first postulated by Hans Selye (1956) with his work on physical stressors from which he evolved the definition of stress as the "body's nonspecific response to any demand placed on it, whether or not that demand is pleasant" (Selye, 1978 p. 74). He discovered that whether demands were life-enhancing or life-threatening the body always responded to the demands in three stages - alarm reaction, resistance, exhaustion - which he called the "general adaptive syndrome." This syndrome involved chemical, neurological changes and physical changes within the body viscera that could be measured, such as blood pressure, body temperature, brain waves. Research following Selye showed that psychological factors produce similar physiological effects.

Interactive definitions depict a blend of the two preceding definitions. Person-environment interaction research defines stress as the unique interaction between an individual and the environment - the intervening process involving the external environment and the person's perceptions of and reaction to it. Theorists Cox and Mackay (1979) and Lazarus (1966, 1981) use this model which sees the

environment as neutral until an individual perceives it in a negative way and reacts to it.

Lazarus and Launier's well-known definition of stress is a condition in which "environmental demands tax or exceed the resources of the person" (1978). Lazarus et al. (1979) found that stress arises from the context of everyday living. They view stress from the standpoint of a person's assessment of an environmental transaction.

Stress is the result of interaction between a person and his environment and how that person assesses and copes with that interaction. It is not inherent within the individual or the situation, but his perception of the situation. Coyne and Lazarus (1980) comment that stress cannot be understood without taking into consideration people's appraisal of their environment and their coping and adapting mechanisms.

Magnusson (1982) uses the term "stressors" (the antecedents of stressful experiences) in referring to the physical and psychosocial environmental demands that can lead to stress reactions in people. He talks about a change of focus in theory and research from the real to the perceived qualities of environment as the important determinant of stress. Cherniss (1980), Coyne and Lazarus (1980) and Selye (1976) concur with this shift of focus.

Lazarus (1981) comments on the extensive research which has been done on effects of dramatic life events, while ignoring daily recurring events which his study shows are more closely correlated with mental health. Several other studies have not shown as significant a correlation between stress and change and major life events as between stress and constant burdensome life conditions (Makosky 1982).

What emerges from a examination of the literature is that the term 'stress' is an enigma. At the begining of my research I though the experts had cracked the nut and produced a clear understanding of stress. I was to find the concept confusing. It can lead to the interpretation of all forms of distressing behaviour as stress. Here lies the route to an intellectual quagmire.

Of course if one tightly and clearly defines stress as Selye does, then I have no serious argument because he is specific about what is meant. Stress in his sense is, however, too narrow a concept for examining the disaffected work behaviour which was my prime interest. What is clear to me that once out of the arena of the physiological definitions of stress the terms ceases to be either an identifiable condition or a specific form of interaction. In much of the research literature the term stress in used without much discipline or consistency. This is to be particularly so in the social work literature. I have little doubt that the majority of social workers use the term "stress" loosely. However, the crucial and realistic factor is that whatever the individual interprets as being stress is stress with all the potential for producing distress to the detriment of the individual and the agency.

I now see the term 'stress' as being a catch all phrase and as little more than an indication of an an area of interest (Beehr, 1987) or a fuzzy indication of interaction between the inner self and one's external environment which the individual experiences as 'distressing' or which disturbs work or personal life. The term 'stressor' I find useful to refer to features of the external environment which are perceived as distressing.

Stress and organizational climate

Research into organizational stress over the past ten years has increased considerably (Glowinkowski and Cooper 1985). "Yet there is still a great deal not known about stress....in organizations" (Sethi and Schuler 1984).

The structure of a formal organization has considerable influence in determining its milieu (Mansfield, 1984 and Hurrell and Colligan, 1987) and behaviour. The very same structure of an organization which seeks to reduce managerial anxiety by minimizing uncertainty and maximizing predictability and stability (Schein 1985) is a likely source of stress for its workers. Structure plays an integral part in influencing an organizational climate which Payne and Pheysey (1971) define as "molar concept reflecting the content and strength of prevailing values, norms, attitudes, behaviour and feelings of its member (individuals and group coalitions) within a social system."

There are those who consider that the very nature of human heterogeneity inclines organizations to become sources of stress. Caplan and Jones (1975) viewed stress as an inherent and pervasive characteristic of formal work settings. Karasek (1979) also considers occupational stress an integral characteristic of the job itself.

Albrecht (1979) noted that for over the past century the organization has come to dominate our culture, and these organizations, of which public social services are examples, have employed various models to the organizing of workers.

Two traditional models that continue to influence the operating of public service organizations are that of bureaucracy, associated with Weber (1946) and scientific management theory associated with Taylor (1911). Medeiros and Schmitt (1977) acknowledge that since the development of these models there has been a greater understanding of their complex properties. A similar

judgment is made by Karger (1988): "Technological management of the social service workplace is rooted in the industrial age of rationality and efficiency." Martin (1983) emphasizes that Taylorism is still notably evident in public sector management.

A later management model, "Theory X and Theory Y," developed by McGregor (1960) continues to attract the interest of social workers. "Theory X" is largely the summarization of the bureaucratic and scientific management models. Pain (1982), referring to these two instinctive reactions to the management task comments, "McGregor distinguishes between ¼the⅛ two contrasting management styles.....Theory X is the expression of traditional views of direction and control" (which relate to the works of Weber and Taylor.) "The philosophy which lies behind Theory X is not one that is likely to be explicitly stated in an organization where most workers are professionals, but nevertheless its outworkings are sometimes evident in the management/staff relationships in social services departments. The local government framework to some extent predisposes managers to adopt bureaucratic attitudes." These attitudes are based on assumptions that workers will fulfill organizational objectives only by constant control and coercions.

"Theory Y" was influenced by organization structure theorists, who in addition to McGregor (1960), included Argyris (1964) and Likert (1967). Schein's (1965) classification of the social and self-actualizing man is compatible with "Theory Y." Individuals, according to McGregor's "Y theory," are not passive or resistant to organizational missions and goals. If they are passive or resistant, the responsibility rests with their experiences in work settings. People have the capacity for motivation and development and the desire to be creative. McGregor saw the need for integrating the individual with the organization with priority being given to guiding not controlling, directing not commanding, and encouraging creativity not coercing compliance or submission. "The essential task of management" according to McGregor (1960) "is to arrange organizational conditions and methods of operations so

that people can achieve their own goals best by directing their own efforts toward organizational objectives.

Pain (1983) is of the view that "even amongst trained social workers (including managers) the philosophy of 'Theory Y,' while it may predominate in the attitudes which are shown to clients, is not always extended to positive attitudes towards subordinates or even colleagues."

In a significant and sensitive work, Harrison (1987) links his ideas on organization culture with an analysis of service issues. These were based on ideas that he and Charles Handy developed in the early seventies. He designed an organizational evaluation instrument (1975) for appraising an organization's culture and a book on the subject was published by Handy in 1978.

Harrison (1987) describes four categories of organization cultures: power, role, achievement and support. "Theory X management style is more likely to be found in a 'role' culture, such as a public social services agencies where there is a hierarchy. Power is exercised through rules, systems and procedures and has little scope for discretion, and the structure of the authority is maintained by sanctions." The Achievement culture, somewhat comparable to Handy's (1976) Task culture, corresponds to Theory Y management. Harrison (1987) sees the organization as providing "opportunities for its members to use their talents and abilities in ways which are intrinsically satisfying, which advance a purpose to which the individual is personally committed. Thus people are internally motivated rather than being controlled from the outside by rewards, punishments or systems."

Organizational stressors

Matteson and Ivancevich (1987) describe a stressor as "a demand made by the internal or external environment that upsets a person's balance and for which restoration is needed. Virtually any

event, situation, or person - even the individual himself - can be a stressor." In their examination of literature concerning coronary heart disease Cooper and Marshall (1976) identified among several significant organizational stressors: factors intrinsic to the job, e.g. work overload (pressure of time), role-based stress (role ambiguity and role conflict), relations with subordinates, colleagues and supervisor, career development factors (anxiety over job security and promotion issues), organizational structure and clients (organizational politics, morale and trust, participation).

Matteson and Ivancevich (1987) in their discussion of work stressors identify similar categories while Cooper (1987) in a later review of the various sources of stress that have a considerable influence in the work place identified 6 significant stressors: factors intrinsic to the job which includes poor working conditions, work overload and physical danger; organization and role characteristics; career development; work relations; organization structure and climate and the interface between home and work.

Overload

According to Golembiewski et al. (1983), overload derives "from too much stimulation and challenge and/or lassitude deriving from too much/too little stimulation and challenge." French and Caplan (1973) classified work overload into two categories, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative overload relates to "too much to do" or "to little to do" with qualitative applying to work that is "to difficult" or "too easy".

Various studies of both quantitative and qualitative work overload have found a number of physical and psychological mal-functions associated with these stressors. French and Caplan (1973) and Margolis et al (1974) identified a number of stress indicators such as job dissatisfaction, low work motivation, escapist drinking, low self esteem, absenteeism, increased smoking, and high levels of cholesterol. The work of Margolis et al.(1974) was examined by

Cooper and Marshall (1978) in relation to the studies of Quinn and Sheppard (1974) and Porter and Lawler (1965). They concluded that the studies were similar in indicating that work overload is a source of stress with detrimental affects on personal well-being. Police officers in a study by Cooper, Davidson and Robinson (1982) see overload as a significant stressor among those in the ranks.

Many researchers in their undertaking of stress studies in human services have frequently catalogued overload as one of several organizational stressors which have a major impact on both individual worker and organization. Jeffreys' (1965) study of an English rural social services department and Mawby's (1979) work in a northern industrial city identified work overload as a stress factor. Overload was found to be of pressing concern in the research of Berkeley Planning Associates (1977), Maslach (1978), and Pines and Aronson (1981). In addition to Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) examining overload in their work "Burn-Out," Cherniss (1980a) does so particularly in his substantive work (1980b) in which he examines what happens to new professionals in the social services field.

Physical conditions

In a paper overviewing organizational stress and health, Hurrell (1987, p. 35) comments that poor physical conditions in the work place would seem to exacerbate "the overall job demands placed on employees, thus lowering tolerance to other work stressors and decreasing worker motivation." Hurrell is reflecting the literature on physical conditions as a stressor. For example, Cooper and Marshall (1976) note the physical and psychological health consequences of poor physical work environments; Sundstrom, Burt and Kamp (1980) refer to employee preference for closed rather than open offices; Golembiewski and Proehl (1978) identify the desire by workers for flexible schedules; and Pines and Aronson (1981), examinging burnout in the human services, views comfortable physical working conditions as being positively related to job satisfaction.

However, Schuler (1984), while acknowledging the association of stress levels and physical working setting, reminds the reader that stress allied with physical conditions is not as discernible as that related to socio-psychological circumstances.

Lack of participation and involvement in decision-making

This was found to be a particularly significant cause of job stress by Margolis et al. (1974), French and Caplan (1970), Smith et al. (1981). Karasek et al. (1979) connect lack of discretionary control over work decisions with increased risk of coronary heart disease. Macbride (1983) relates responsibility without authority as major job stressors felt by the front-line people in terms of agency policy decisions or related to carrying out one's job. Robert Karasek (1979) cites in his study of job settings and stress that the interaction of unreasonable work loads and lack of participation in decision-making as very deleterious. More recently Gibson et al. (1989) reported that respondents in the study of stress among social workers complained of lack of influence in decision-making.

Role ambiguity and role conflict

A great number of studies have looked at the effect of role ambiguity and role conflict as well as work load (quantitative and qualitative overload and underload and work pacing. Studies of Margolis et al. (1974), Caplan and Jones (1975) connect role ambiguity and conflict to stress and illness. Daley (1979) references role issues in his explanation of why public sector protective services workers burn out. Jayaratne and Chess (1984) saw child welfare workers role conflict in the differences existing between legal requirements and agencies' policies.

Studies of Margolis et al. (1974), Caplan and Jones (1975) connect role ambiguity and conflict to stress and illness. Jayaratne and Chess (1984) see child welfare workers' role conflict in the

differences existing between legal requirements and agencies' policies. Leiter and Meecham (1984) in their investigation of role structure as a causative factor for burnout in a mental health centre found a positive correlation between role ambiguity and a sense of personal accomplishment, contrary to what Cherniss' (1980a) model indicates.

Authority levels

Social workers at different authority levels experience different stresses. Practitioners complain of being poorly equipped for their jobs with frequently not enough specialized training or resources. Senior level practitioners have specialized knowledge which is not well utilized within the department and in policy making. Middle managers are caught between demands from above and below with not enough support from above. Senior managers are at the mercy of budget cuts and politics. "Perhaps one of the most potentially stressful job components is the notion of responsibility without authority. People who experience their jobs as stressful are often those who bear the front-line responsibility for making the 'system' work, while at the same time having little or no authority to change or influence the system." (MacBride, 1983).

Work relations

Work organizations are human enterprises and therefore for the most part organizational stressors are a product of inter-personal relationships. It is evident from the literature that positive relations are critical to the health of both the individual worker and the organization (Yates, 1979).

The work of French and Caplin (1972) and Davidson and Cooper (1983) show that the quality of relations individuals have with coworkers, supervisors/line managers and subordinates relate to the level of job stress. Poor relations were seen as reflective of lack of trust, little supportiveness and failure to listen to and deal

with problems facing the individual worker. Khan et al. (1964) found that improvished relations between bosses and workers was a source of stress. Cooper and Marshall (1976) identified lack of trust and support in the workplace as a significant generator of stress. Conversely, French, Caplin and Harrison (1982) acknowledge the positive effects of supportive relationships in easing job pressures as well as benefiting the individual's well-being.

A summary of the NALGO report 'Social Work Crises' (Fry 1989) based on research by Southampton University in six British social services departments concludes that organizational relations within these agencies are poor. Maslach and Pines (1977) in their study of staff in child day centres showed that good work relations were necessary to achieving a positive work climate. Mawby (1979) found in his Bradford study of social workers in both the statutory and voluntary sectors over a quarter expressed concern about relations with colleagues. Furthermore, Barrett and McKelvey (1980) found agency relations to be a common stressor among social workers.

Supervision and support

The abundance of literature on the practitioner-supervisor process contrasts the sparseness of attention given to the supervisors of social work managers. This probably reflects the traditional approach to supervision which is to focus on the front-line supervisor-practitioner relationship. This only serves to reinforce the reluctance of supervision for social work senior managers and compounding the reluctance of public sector services to implement effective supervisory programmes for their managers.

Cooper and Smith (1985) write about the importance of supervising support as a mechanism for reducing stress because it insures a worker of at least one supportive relationship in the organization as well as establishing a communication channel. They further emphasize that supervisors and managers themselves need support from above. They will have little incentive to be

supportive of subordinates without positive support from above. House (1981) says that social support must be an organization-wide commitment. "Thus higher levels of an organization should constitute models and positive sanctions for the efforts of lower levels to be more supportive."

Supervision in social work has long been seen as pivotal to successful service delivery, having its roots in Charity Organization Societies of the nineteenth century (Austin, 1966). Generally, supervision is seen to apply to all levels of workers and is frequently referred to as the art of accomplishing work through the efforts and abilities of others. It is "an administrative function, a process for getting the work done and maintaining organizational control and accountability." (Miller 1977, p. 1544).

Kadushin (1985), a leading social work writer on the supervisory process, notes that supervision reviewed from a historical perspective reveals it has been dominated depending on author preference for stressing either its educative or administrative function. He offers a comprehensive definition of supervision in terms of the social work supervisor's responsibility A supervisor "is an agency administrative staff member to whom authority is delegated to direct, coordinate, enhance and evaluate on-the-job performance of supervisees for whose work is held accountable ... in accordance with agency policies and procedures" Although Kadushin does not make a specific reference to the function of support in his definition of supervision, he devotes a chapter to it in his book (Kadushin, 1985).

Quinn and Shephard (1974) and Smith et al. (1981) find that the supervisory or managerial style introduced by modern technology of tight control, constant negative feedback and impersonal overseeing of performance leads to low morale and high levels of stress. Hvinden (1984) reports Stjerno to have found high levels of psychosomatic symptoms.

M. Shinn. et al. (1984) found that women reported more social support than men. Pines and Aronson (1981) found the same. The importance of social support in combating stress has been emphasized in the studies of Caplan (1974), Caplan and Killea (1976), and Lenrow (1978a, 1978b). Cherniss (1980b) also describes the barriers to establishing mutual support. In their broad sample of human service workers, (Shinn, Rosario, Morch and Chestnut) 64% of their respondents claimed some social support from co-workers. It is interesting that the agency employed so few of the strategies the workers suggested would help alleviate stress, that many of them responded with considerable bitterness. Shinn et al (1984) looked at two types of coping and support: problem-focused and emotion-focused. They feel that their stress-strain-coping paradigm is useful in understanding burnout. Their results support those of the Berkeley Planning Associates (1977) that poor supervision and communication are closely correlated with stress and burnout and with Shapiro's (1982) study that shows good supervision is a good antidote to burnout. Agency-generated strategies for relieving stress are still mostly untried.

Cherniss (1980b) in his examination of staff burnout in the human services refers to the myth that among care givers collegial relationships are usually strongly supportive, which of course the majority of social work practitioners and managers know is painfully not the case. Fineman (1985), in my view, furthers this realism by revealing evidence of poor support within all but one of the five teams he studied.

There is in the literature, considerable support for the idea that, for instance "Social support is clearly an important buffer for life stress" (Goldberg 1983). Middleman and Rhodes (1985) see supervision and social support as critical ways of reducing work-generated stress in social work. There are those writers who are positive about the role or technique of social support in dealing with stress but who are also cautious in giving it too much credit. "There is nothing in the design of the research

that gives strong evidence for the validity of this inference. The inference that social support causes improvements in stressful job situations, therefore, is far from proven." (Beehr, 1985).

While I pay heed to the caution of Beehr, the overall positiveness of much of the literature and my own experiences as a receiver and giver of social support encourages me to see it as a significant potential buffer against the destructive impact of work stress, providing that the organizational levels of morale and trust are sufficently high. Obviously if the organizational climate is malevolent the social support system can become little more than a perpetual and mutual gripe system which only adds to individual stress and expedites deterioration of the individual's wellbeing.

Consequently, the success of supervisory and collegial social support as a mitigator of organizationally-induced stress is highly dependent on healthy interactional factors among colleagues at all levels in the work setting.

From the screening of the literature on stress and burnout related to the public sector social services, no study was evident that focused on finding out if British and American public sector social workers' experiences of organizational factors that cause them to feel stress are similar or dissimilar.

Chapter 3

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL WORK

This chapter comments briefly on historical developments of social work and later overviews the nature of social work from my own perspective to help further the reader's understanding of the context of the study.

Social work as we know it today in Britain and America has its genesis in the philanthropies and charities of the 19th. Century. The term social work came into usage around the end of the nineteenth century. It reflected an approach to poverty that recognized that the then traditional forms of arbitrary private and voluntary efforts were increasingly ineffective for dealing with the complex human problems of established industrialization in both countries. Well organized voluntary societies were established to ensure a structured and rational approach to dealing with poverty and its consequences. One of the most influential was the Charity Organization Society (C.O.S.). First established in Britain, it quickly took root in America, being independent of its British counterpart. In the early part of this century the C.O.S. in Britain became the well known Family Welfare Association.

Although the organization, reflective of prevailing values of the day, generally interpreted poverty as a blameworthy condition, its many voluntary workers quickly developed into the proficient forerunners of the modern social worker. Their disciplined and consistent approach to helping the 'deserving poor' based on a code of behaviour and training, record keeping and inquiring approach to the prevalence of social problems contributed considerably to the eventual development of professionalism in social work and served as a prelude to the establishment of social work education.

The later half of the 19th Century in Britain saw the emergence of the harbinger of the probation officer (Court Missionary) in the court system and the medical social worker (Almoner) in the general hospital. Some four decades later, due to the influence of American social work education, we saw the establishment of the psychiatric social worker in Britain. Certainly, for several more decades the hospital almoners and the psychiatric social workers associations were the standard setters in the professional training of social workers in this country.

With the welfare legislation of the late forties and early fifties the scene was set for the developing of comprehensive personal social services, children departments were created. A probation service was established by the Criminal Justice Act of 1948 which embodied the principal of reformation rather than punishment. There were not sufficient numbers of trained social workers to staff the new positions in the agencies. Consequently, the large majority of the newly created positions were likely to be filled by untrained people. Attempts to overcome this shortage resulted in the Home Office establishing the Central Council in Child Care and the Advisory Council for Probation and After Care which between them undertook responsibility for the training and certification of child care and probation workers.

The expansion of these and other local authority social services was given further impetus by the 1959 Mental Health Act, which gave rise to the mental welfare officer. There was a realization that social work training needed central coordination. This lead to the establishment in 1971 of a statutory body, the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW). It took over responsibility from the two existing mandatory social work training councils and has the authority to promote and control training in all fields of social work. Although the medical and psychiatric social workers' associations had for many years had their own training and accreditation arrangements with universities, they had long been advocates of a centralized body that would have

authoritative control over training programmes for all categories of social workers.

CCETSW not only approves all social work training courses but issues certification to all successful students which is accepted by social work employing authorities for employment and salary purposes in both the public and voluntary sectors.

Generally, many local authorities today will not accept untrained social workers for employment in their community and hospital settings. While it is not the intention of this study to consider residential workers, it is interesting to note that local authorities continue to recruit unqualified residential staff and that the large majority currently working are unqualified. For the past several years there have been attempts to train and certify these workers within the CCETSW framework. This has involved much controversial debate concerning curriculum content of training and the status recognition of those who gained certification.

There has been some abatement of the tensions created by those qualified community-based workers who traditionally claimed a higher status than that of unqualified residential workers. In the past this certainly has served to add to the existing work frustrations and stress for both groups of workers. This will not be finally resolved until the status of the professional residential qualification is recognized in financial terms and ensures the same promotional opportunities as the community-based worker. One major difficulty was defining the scope of residential work in relation to an established social work method. I have no doubt that residential workers should be given the opportunity to become trained professionals and be given status equal to the community-based worker. I hope that as the development of ecological and holistic models of practice (based on the general applicability of particular skills) gathers momentum, any concerns about skill distinctions will seen to be what they are - shallow and artificial.

Although it varies from state to state, in general the large majority of public personal social services in America, in addition to being understaffed, have comparatively few trained workers. In many states like Georgia entry to caseworker positions in the Department of Family and Children Services does not require a Council for Social Work accredited qualification. A large number of baccalaureate students reportedly try to avoid the public sector because of overload and poor pay and status and go into the non-profit sector. Masters people tend to avoid most public sector employment for the same reasons, with a significant number wanting to go into private practice. For me this is somewhat alien compared with my experience in Britain where there still remains a large commitment to the public sector. There are of course American workers who have similar views, but comparatively fewer in number and not very vociferous. From my limited observations, the abandonment of the public sector by qualified social workers does result in tension but usually very muted.

I trained in the early sixties, pre-CCETSW, as both a psychiatric social worker and medical social worker on university courses approved by the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers and the Institute of Almoners, later to become the Institute of Medical Social Workers. This was at a time before genericism was popular and one specialized, on the basis of preferred setting which, as I have indicated earlier, was community mental health.

Although curriculum content is always changing social the foundation blocks of training remains fourfold: knowledge, skills and values reinforced by a code of ethics, and practice. A vital and integral factor in developing social work competencies or if you wish putting theory into practice is the supervisory relation between supervisor and student.

During training it was emphasized, as I do with my students now, that social workers must keep abreast of new and changing social work knowledge and skill within the prevailing socio-

political context. But like many practising social workers, there were times when due to overload and time constraints my interest in acquiring new knowledge and skill was confined to an 'urgent need to know' basis. There were times when this backfired, which reinforces my determination to share the reality of good intentions with my students. Clearly there are social work agencies who ignore the difficulties of workers in updating their knowledge and skill repertoires. For the most part, in my experience, I do not believe this to be contrived but more the consequence of an inability or ineptitude by management to design a system for ensuring a wide range of competence enhancement necessary for effective social services functioning.

From the abundance of books on social work there is evidence of the proliferation of lists of social work values and associated principles. Of the several value inventories there is one (Biestek 1957) that I was introduced to during my training and to which I remain attached. Biestek identifies seven values: individualization, purposeful expression of feelings, controlled emotional involvement, acceptance, nonjudgemental attitude, self-determination and confidentiality. These values were written at a time when casework was the primary social work method. However, they have a generality about them that allows them to serve workers in human systems of any composition and size.

Notwithstanding the inevitable limitations of Biestek's principles, my working experience in the public sector showed that operating by these values was a frequent source of frustration and stress. Take for example individualization which acknowledges that each human being is unique and deserves consideration and respect. The individual practitioner and manager accepts this, but conflicts with their agency when it lacks either the time or authority and material resources to meet the well justified individual needs of a particular client such as a homeless person or day care for a seriously handicapped person. A worker's efforts to establish a therapeutic programme with some highly stigmatized or controversial

categories of clients such as sex offenders and hardened welfare cases can be undermined by an agency that has punitive policies towards such people. In some American states it is an offence for public sector social workers to offer counselling for abortion. Finally when I left my social services job to come to America in 1986, at a time when workers were concerned that there was an increasing violation of social values in the interest of greater accountability under the guise of 'value for money'. To some little more than an example of increasing enforced bureaucratization and central government politicalization of public social work.

The value of social work supervision in my practice became evident where I was closely sustained in building the foundation of my future skill and coping repertoires. Like many students in training, I came the closest I ever have to the 'ideal' of regular supervision with committed adherence to its main functions of being supportive, educative and administrative. It is true that student supervision by its very nature must be highly supportive and in the early stages of training protective for the benefit of both client and student. For the most, the student's supervisor becomes a model which is often evident in a workers early career and which is sometimes a recipe for disappointment. Because I received good supervisory experiences during my training, my expectations of supervision in my first post were a bit high, leading to shock. There was no supervision for any one in the organization other than the passing inquiry about the status of ones work in order to make decisions how cases should be allocated.

This trauma was more the situation than not for many new and established practitioners and managers and remains so to-day. For many new workers moving from the regularity of student supervision to erratic supervision or none at all can have a damaging effect on their professional and personal development. While some stumble through their work, others become frustrated, and disillusionment sets in. Others, like me, looked for other ways of maintaining competence or abandoned the agency. From my experience as both

practitioner and manager, I realize that large numbers of personal social services staff at all levels receive little more than a shadow of supervision or consultation. This often only serves to feed the feeling among workers struggling with heavy workloads and lack of resources that "the organization" has little interest in their well-being past their doing their job without "disturbing the ship". My experience was that not only did subordinates view those above them as unsupportive and authoritarian but superiors viewed subordinates as being censorious of them.

In many public personal social services departments there is a strong equivocation among managers and practitioners about the value and quality of administrative and managerial activities. Management is often viewed as reflecting more allegiance to itself and to politicians in the interest of self survival. This is often interpreted by field staff as detrimental to clients. Not unusually, those social workers who have moved into management are viewed as having sold out their social work commitment. Having been both a practitioner and manager I can identify with having given and received such sentiments. Incidentally, when I entered teaching I recall being accused by both field worker and manager that I was fleeing to the comforts of academia from the hardships of reality because "you can't take it."

There are several obvious measures that agencies might adopt to reduce the discord between practitioner and manager, however, I do believe that social work training courses in both Britain and America fail students by not giving sufficient attention to preparing them to function in organizations, public or private. I do not suggest that this would be lead to a finite trouble shooting repertoire for dealing with the repetitious and novel difficulties tat arise in any formal organization. It would assist workers to have more understanding of what is happening to them and help rationalize their experiences in the interest of preventing or reducing emotional damage and excessive stress. After all, universities and colleges have abundant knowledge about modern day

complex organizations and should be sharing this with both practitioner and manager (and please politicians!).

As with many other social workers throughout training, I remained uneasy (and still do) about the tensions between the 'benevolence' of social work and social control. Because social workers operate, like all professionals especially in the public sector, within a societal infrastructure which is determined by the prevailing socio-political values, they are under persistent pressure to maneuver clients towards accommodating those institutions and value systems that may have caused their problems in the first place. There is no doubt that large numbers of British and American social workers and their professional associations are greatly worried by this increasing development, especially in the public sector. Whatever this strength of feeling the majority of social workers are unable to depart too far from organizational expectations. Of course, social workers do endeavour to manipulate policies and regulations to their clients' benefit but to do so too frequently risks detection and disciplinary action with the loss of promotion opportunities and possible dismissal.

My own professional experience shows that there are of course situations where social control is very necessary for the benefit of client and the wider community. Take for example child abuse and neglect, a highly disturbed psychiatric patient, the elderly person who endangers their own life due to self neglect, and the criminal offender.

My concern, however, is with the frequent uncritical attempts at client conformity which addresses the presenting problem in terms of the need for economic self-sufficiency and the moral rectitude. There is the old poor law 'deserving poor' syndrome which has reincarnated in the form of 'workfare' where economic deprivation is often just one of several symptoms of serious underlying dysfunctions which need attention before encouraging clients into employment. There are examples of American social

workers who are encouraged to use social security benefits to force clients to adopt a life style that is more in accord with the value expectations of legislators and sometimes those front-line workers dispensing this form of financial help. Little attention is given to undertaking a thorough assessment of such clients psycho-social circumstances which would reflect sorry states that no amount of allocated cash could alleviate. This brings to mind a study by Miller (1975), which although dated, is just as pertinent today, in which he discusses social work's negative attitude towards lower class clients who are seen as being undesirably out of tune with the wider societal values and therefore should have their behaviour modified accordingly. Incidentally, the previous examples throw into sharp relief how we social workers can find ourselves in conflict with one of the fundamentals of our ethical code which is commitment to protecting the individual's right to self-determination.

Incidentally, I share the view that the underfunding and low image of statutory social services agencies is a direct extension of the community's attitude and serves to inform consumers of these services how it expects them to behave.

I have referred to several aspects of social work without defining the term. This I shall now briefly undertake. Firstly I must distinguish the difference between social work and personal social services or welfare because some use the terms interchangeably. Social work is a professionalized avocation. Personal social services, such as the two public agencies in this study, are organizations within which social workers implement their professional knowledge and skill with resources provided by the organization within prescribed policies and regulations. Usually social work is the primary focus or grouping in social services agencies.

The wide range of tasks and roles within which social workers operate make it difficult to give an adequate definition of social work. However, the social literature abounds with generalized definitions that do little that give an adequate understanding of what social work is about. At one level the range of social work is so wide no definition could cover it. On the other hand, you will find some definitions which are often related to specialized social work settings so narrow that they are also useless. I do not intend to discuss the limitations of social work definitions; Timms and Timms (1977) discuss more than adequately concerns about these limitations.

A nice general philosophical definition which I like is the one by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW 1973). "Social work aims to harness the potential in society towards solving its own problems.... It is concerned with bridging the gap between the individual and society, with supporting him when he is vulnerable and with striving to improve the quality of life by ensuring that human needs are not overlooked or over-ridden in this industrial society."

During the late 1960s and the early 1970s social work theorists were giving much attention to the use of systems thinking practice. This development was the outcome of an increasing concern in the 1960s, more so in the States than Britain, that traditional casework with its emphasis on cause and effect was somewhat limited in dealing with the increasing multifarious human problems of the time. For example, Pincus and Minahan (1973) developed a model which is often referred to as the unitary approach. They described social work as "concerned with the interactions between people and their social environment which affect the ability of people to accomplish their life tasks, alleviate distress, and realize their aspirations and values. The purpose of social work therefore is to (1) enhance the problem-solving and coping capacities of people, (2) link people with systems that provide them with resources, services, and opportunities, (3) promote the effective and humane operation of

these systems, and (4) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy." This description of social work acknowledges the defectiveness of community socio-economic support systems within which people daily interact. They are conveying the message that given these circumstances individuals are not altogether responsible for ensuing problems. The causes frequently reside outside the individual's own self boundary, within formal and informal systems over which many of the individuals social workers deal with have little or no control.

At the same time, Germain (1974), motivated by the systems approach and holistic theory with its roots in the writings of General Jan Smuts, politician and statesman, developed what has become known as the ecological systems approach (or ecological perspective) to the application of social work practice. She views ecology as a science "...concerned with the adaptive fit of organisms and their environments and with the means by which they achieve a dynamic equilibrium and mutuality. It seems to furnish an appropriate metaphor for a helping profession concerned with the relationships between human being and their interpersonal and organizational environments with helping to modify or to enhance the quality of transactions between the people and their environments and with seeking to promote environments that support human well-being."

In their joint work Germain and Gitterman (1980) enhance the value of the ecological systems approach by the development of "the life model" theory which encompasses holistic theory. "In the Life Model, human problems and needs are conceptualized as outcomes of transactions between the parts of that whole. Thus they are defined as problems in living which have created stress and taxed coping abilities. Within the interface where person and environment touch, the problem of need reflect a disjunction between coping needs and environmental nutriments." (p.371).

Many social workers who have been trained in and value the ecological perspective charge that the political, economic and social constraints reflected in underfunding, understaffing, and rigid bureaucratization, does not allow them to do their job. In addition, many of the socioeconomic systems that are necessary to support their clients are themselves inadequately resourced. For example, currently in Atlanta over 4000 children have been identified by social workers as needing foster homes for which there are none, with the result that children are all too frequently left in abusive situations. Because of heavy case overloads, the foster homes that do exist cannot be adequately screened. Accommodations and supportive facilities for many physically and mentally disabled are not available, which leads to a revolving hospital admission door. Other major sources of anxiety for social workers are the homeless (including families with children), lack of drug rehabilitation facilities and AIDS facilities, and increasing number of families in poverty in need of these inadequate support systems.

Certainly, with the cyclorama of everyday happenings in public personal social services, it is no surprise that the cost for staff in human terms is emotionally damaging. Workers in my last agency frequently referred to being in various states of stress with the fear of burnout. I share the view that stress is an experience where the individual lacks the repertoire to handle a threatening situation be it emotional or/and physical. From my own personal experiences as a practitioner and manager the term is applied loosely and often used to describe everyday feelings of wear and tear, minor irritations and to explain periodic purging of pent up emotions.

Now quite clearly there are numerous workers (I believe more than is realized) in public social services who I have seen manifest various levels of stress. Those who are in a worryingly progressive state who in time will join those who are chronically disillusioned and are candidates for complete emotional and physical exhaustion. The point made elsewhere is that if people think they are in a state

of stress their behaviour can become problematic to themselves as well as the agencies. The handling of stress based on my own observations is usually idiosyncratic with common features. There were those who intensified their work activities to keep at bay disturbed behaviour like anger and disaffection. Others were touchy and ready to take issue at the slightest matter seen as disturbing their fragile equilibrium. There were those who withdrew into themselves, doing the bare essentials to cope with each day which was clearly too much for them. I recall such an individual, who vented his anger by becoming the "barrack room lawyer". He was always alert to finding ways of attacking my personal decisions. He did little work, other than trying to interpret conditions of service regulations to minimize his workload. He suffered from several psychosomatic conditions and like so many workers who are unhappy at work, was frequently absent due to real or contrived illness. Then there were the those who took on the management stance, investing it with ineffability and there were a few who left the agency.

A significant issue facing social work today in the public sector is the negative consequences on the well-being of the worker as a result of the conflicts between the values and goals of the social work professional and those of the bureaucratic structure of the welfare system.

Chapter 4

DIVISIVE EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON SOCIAL WORK AGENCIES

Concomitant with concern about managerial issues, public social services agencies in both countries are having currently to cope with a number of external pressures which are having a significant morale impact on all work groups. Few of these pressures unite staff at all levels, while many seriously divide practitioner and manager, revealing the differences in their orientation and value systems.

A chronic pressure on public social services in Britain and America is the unsympathetic political and social climate within which they currently operate. An overall anxiety is that a significant aim of current political ideology is to ensure that social services are less politically responsive and more managerially assertive. In the USA there is much evidence to support this concern which has its origin in the 1970s Nixon era. The Nixon administration began the process of applying industrial management concepts to federal welfare programmes which quickly permeated state-level welfare agencies.

"Part of this plan, based on the so called McNamara principal (application of industrial management approaches to social welfare) involved the takeover of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Through power of appointment and normal attrition, Nixon was able to replace many old-line social work administrators with 'new managers'. The new managers, drawn heavily from business, military, and the management science programs, were able to shift policy directions from program expansion to program accountability and coordination." "The Nixon era," states Morris (1979), "represented an attempt to withdraw from the preventive policy and to return to the basic principles with a new focus, namely, the partial dismantling of the existing income maintenance

programs and their reconstituting conforming to contemporary standards of business management.' The new managers used the power of the purse (grants to the states) and the power of regulation (state plans) to incorporate the new management strategy within state and local social service agencies. By the end of the 1970s an administrative structure was in place that would prove to be unsympathetic to further growth or enrichment of social services." (Walz and McIntosh, 1985).

The Thatcher government appears committed to applying to the British personal social services the American management approach to welfare, which equates to what Hadley (1986) refers to as Managerialism. As yet, while there is an accumulation of evidence of this at central rather than local government level, the process is not as pronounced as in the States. The British Association of Social Work in its journal (Social Work Today, 31 March, 1988) reported with some anxiety a recent appointment of a career civil servant, with financial management skills, to one of two Deputy Chief Inspector posts in the Department of Health and Social Security Social Services Inspectorate. The second deputy who has been in the post for some while is also a career civil servant. Traditionally most senior posts in the Social Services Inspectorate have been held by qualified social workers as is the present incumbent of the post of Chief Inspector.

The British Association of Social workers, echoing the concerns of many levels of staff in the personal social services and organizations such as the Social Care Association and the Association of Directors of Social Services, has voiced its disquiet. "The Association is concerned that too much emphasis could be placed on cost-effectiveness and too little on the standard of service provided" (1988).

Another area of developing anxiety for British social work concerns the Audits Commission's excursions into the operations of British personal social services. Where this has occurred, its comments have been received with suspicion. One significant report, (Managing social work more effectively, 1986) is a pilot study which looks at social work in Leeds, Sommerset and Stockport.

The report was highly critical of the way in which three social services departments operated. The three directors of those social services received the Audit Commission's report rather defensively. (Fry, A. 1986, p. 23.) While some parts of the report were seen as useful, many social workers and their organizations received it with scepticism.

The crux of the concerns for many inside and outside of social work is that the Audit Commission is seen as little more than an agent for undermining the public sector services. The government's and Commissioner's watchphrase "value for money" is considered to be little more than a thin disguise for cuts in public expenditure. Whatever the justification for this apprehension, it does undermine the acceptance of positive contributions the Commission may make to enhancing the work of the personal social services.

In Britain and America during a period of dwindling resources in the personal social services, new pieces of legislation are being enacted, increasing central government rules and regulations to deal with an increasingly broadening demand and expectations of social services from an enlarging socio-economically distressed and disadvantaged group.

The morale of public sector social services staff is being further undermined by the resolute way in which privatization is being pursued. While the privatization process has been part of the American scene for a few decades, it (with volunteerism) has appeared to have gotten momentum since the beginning of the

eighties, and (Mahaffey 1988, p. 9) is reported as having said "it has failed to live up to expectations." Its pursuance today is based on a neo-conservative philosophy which favors the whole arena of public social services/welfare to be absorbed by for-profit corporations, private practices and the voluntary sector. While the voluntary sector in Britain has played a vital part in the development of statutory social services, the for-profit sector and private practices have until recently played a minor part.

This is changing, however, as a vigorous application of market economy principles gets under way in Britain. Large numbers of social workers, evidenced by letters and articles in Social Work Today, are very concerned that the profitable aspects of public social services, such as certain categories of institutional and day care of the elderly and children and young people, family and psychiatric counselling, will be "sold off." If this happens, many social workers fear being compelled, as has happened in the States, to work for individual or corporate entrepreneurial organizations or the voluntary sector. News media continually report state inquiries in America that show this can lead to a decrease in standards of care and greater likelihood of conflict between the social worker and the organization because of the dominance of the profit motive.

Another possible scenario in Britain is that with privatizing of local authority care systems, social workers will become little more than coordinators of purchased care packages for clients. The consequences may well be as in some American states in which private care packages are sold in 'supermarket-style' rather than tailored to meet the needs of individual clients. Also the experience and non-profitable statutory social services such as the chronically physically and mentally ill and handicapped and the disadvantaged low income clients will remain a local authority responsibility. This situation is evident in the USA where social workers caseloads are dominated by people unable to afford the private sector. This only serves to reinforce the distinction between the "haves and the have nots." And this tends to lead to an

overall negative perception of mandatory public social services, contributing significantly to underfunding of state welfare services.

The present demand for managerial assertiveness in the public services, especially in the area of financial constraints and efficiency, is pushing personal social services into the information technology arena - a process which is generating much anxiety among both managers and practitioners who feel it will expose them to a novel form of scrutiny. Managers, while viewing it as an aid to their functions, feel it will raise performance expectations to an unrealistic level. Practitioners, on the other hand, observe information technology as another management control mechanism. They also see it as disadvantaging their clients by the mechanical profiling and controlling of their relationship with their clients (Glastonbury 1987).

Perhaps some of the unease expressed by social services staff in Britain and America may not be warranted, but quite a number appear attuned to the thinking of Reinecke (1984) who considers it essential to give critical thought on how the information technological revolution will affect our social institutions and critical social issues.

There is much anxiety among American qualified social workers (especially in the public sector) and their professional body, the National Association of Social Workers, about creeping declassification of public sector social work positions. This process began in the mid-seventies and was accelerated during the Reagan Administration.

Declassification is "... the reduction in the standards of education and work related experience for public sector social service jobs ..." (this process is viewed as) "... a formidable challenge facing the social work profession because those revisions in job specifications are not isolated, temporary changes. Pecora & Austin (1983) suggested that there is a well calculated declassification process aimed at bringing uniformity of purpose and function to America's social services programmes. This threatens to undermine the social work profession by removing the necessity to have a social work qualification to be employed in the public social services.

In their writings, Pecora and Austin (1983) identify several significant factors that have contributed to the declassification of American public social services positions. Firstly, the dearth of qualified social workers in, or willing to enter, the public sector. Secondly, with the consolidation of the piece-meal administered specialist agencies, many social workers (as did numbers of the British social workers in the Seebohm reorganization,) felt, and still continue to feel, a loss of identity when their new large organization pursued a policy of purpose and function at the expense of staff relations and job satisfaction. Thirdly, the reluctance of many states to introduce social work licensing undermines the profession of social work as other care giving professionals with counselling qualification (e.g.. psychologists and educationalists) are able to compete for positions in public social services. Fourthly, there has been an expedient use of equal employment opportunity leading to an arbitrary removal of educational requirements for social services posts. Fifthly, the negative attitudes towards social work professionalism by social services managers or administrators accompanied by an increasing politicization of the social services management structure.

The contemporary political, economic and social pressures facing social services workers superimposed on existing client- and organizational-related stress has placed public social services in a state of perpetual crises. There are those who would claim that much of the current disquiet present in social services agencies has been largely engineered by political ideology. Others suggest it is mainly because social work has lost sight of its traditional goals "... threshing around in a maelstrom of uncertainty ..." (Blom Cooper, 1988). There is an evident relationship between being an effective worker and experiencing job satisfaction (Schwab, and Cummings 1970) and the opportunity for self-development (Spilerman, 1977). Wherever responsibility lies for the beleaguered state of public social services, these agencies need to give urgent attention to establishing effective support systems and staff development policies to help staff maintain their competence and confidence at a time when the whole future of public social services is uncertain.

To achieve this aim will surprisingly not be without difficulty. Surprising because most British and American public social services who would claim that service to their clientele is based on a caring philosophy give little attention to the psycho-social needs of their staff. Very few agencies are knowledgeable about the development of strategies for improving the quality of their employee's working lives, especially in the area of work stress reduction.

It is against this background of political antipathy and ever-shrinking resources in addition to a rigid seemingly indifferent bureaucratic structure with chronic endemic stresses, that public social services workers in Great Britain and the United States are trying to carry out their professional responsibilities. As a result, there is an increasing turnover and disillusionment among social workers.

PART II

FIELD STUDIES

Chapter 5.
THE TWO AGENCIES

The research interest by the time I got to field work was about the major organizational factors that cause public personal social services practitioners and managers to feel stressed. There are several assumptions behind this study:

1. There are organizational factors that cause stress and exacerbate the stress that is endemic to the client-worker relationship.
2. In both Britain and America the changed political climate has brought about serious reduction in financial resources for social services, increased managerial control over social services personnel and a loss of public confidence in the statutory social services. All this has served to accentuate the uncertainty and unpredictability inherent in the public personal social services.
3. There is a lack of skill and/or will in the mandatory personal social services to try to deal effectively with organizational as well as client-related stress.
4. Where there is a lack of organizational or social support, lack of participation or feelings of having little or no control over work environment and consistent work overload, a high level of stress will be perceived.
5. In spite of the stressful experiences, there are many practitioners and managers reluctant to leave a career to which they are dedicated.

The locations of the study were in the Field Work Services Division of a social services department in northern England to be called Northumberland and the Child and Adult Protective Services, a division of the Department of Family and Children Services, a section of the Department of Human Resources in the American southern State of Georgia.

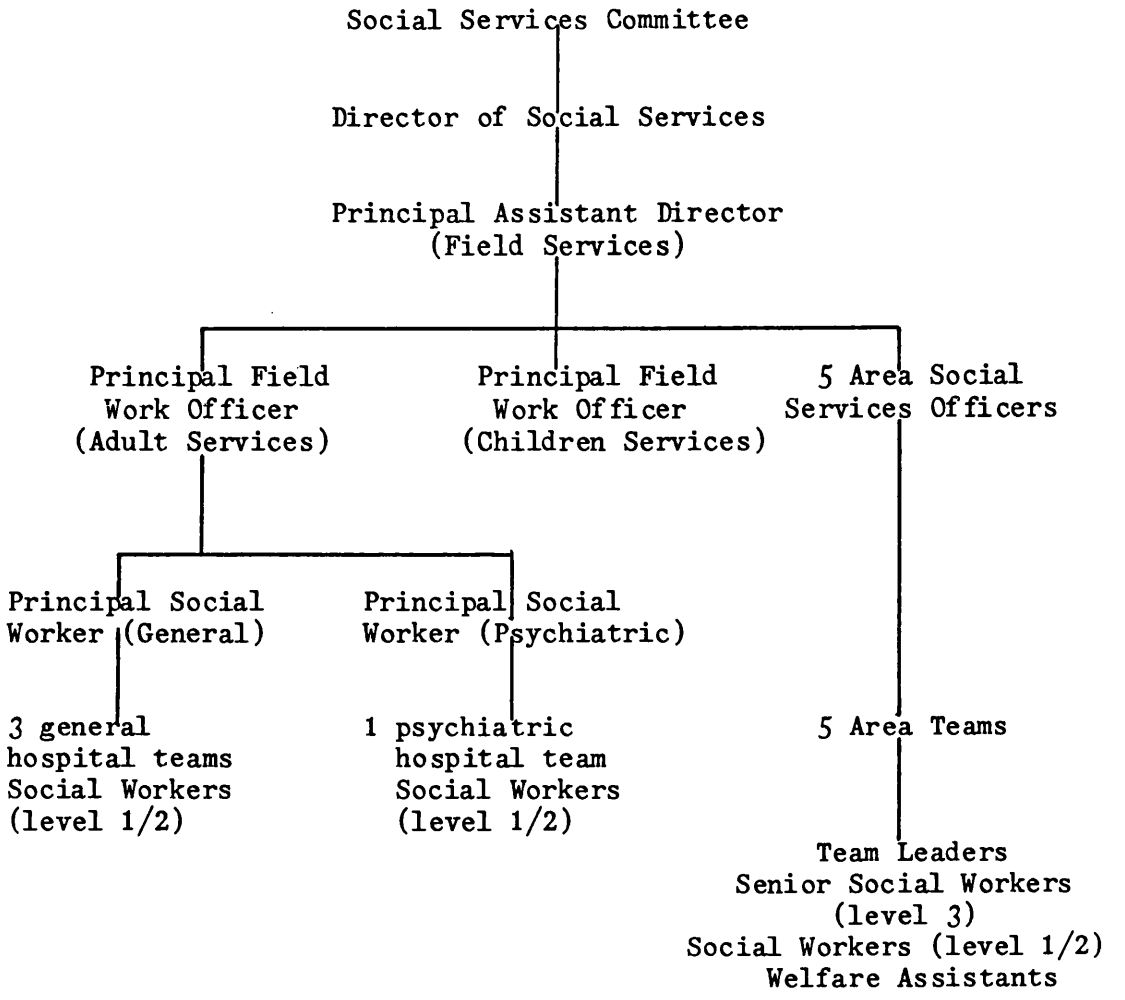
Northumberland

Northumberland Social Services Department was chosen because I wanted to study a social services department near my home, enabling economy in time, travel and finance. Of three departments surrounding my home area, two passed and one agreed to allow me to undertake the study as I had designed it.

The Social Services Department served a large county which was predominantly rural in character with its well-established market towns. Although much of Northumberland is sparsely populated, there was an urban concentration at one end of the county which was adjacent to a major city of another county. The urban area comprised a "new town" and two old established industrial towns which, once thriving, had declined over recent years resulting in numerous socioeconomic problems.

Established in 1972 following the implementation of the 1970 Social Work Act, the department was under the direction of a social services director. The agency served the community through three main divisions - field work services, residential and day care services, each managed by a principal assistant director, and administration and finance. Under the direction of an assistant director, all were accountable to the director of social services (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. Structure of Northumberland Social Work Department



The Northumberland social services department's management and administrative headquarters housed in County Hall was located in a major market town contiguous to the three urban centres of population referred to above. It was the policy of the department to employ only qualified social workers in the field work services division except for welfare assistants. Welfare assistants who did not have social work qualifications were assigned tasks of a non-complex nature, so releasing social workers for work that required their specialist knowledge and skills.

As the study centred on the field work services division (see Figure 1), any further reference to the other two divisions will be limited to the extent that reference enhances the purpose of the analysis. The field work officers based at County Hall assisted the principal assistant director in carrying out his responsibility for developing certain specialist services. One principal field work officer who was concerned with services for children and young people had 4 advisory staff accountable to him who were not relevant to the study. The second principal field work officer's responsibilities related to adult specialist services which included hospital-based social services.

The primary outlet for field work services delivery was through five area officers and 4 hospital-based social work teams. The practice approach to main line service delivery emphasized genericism, bearing in mind that prior to Seebohm, the large majority of the department's workers had been specialists working in statutory specialist agencies.

Each of the area offices was managed by an area social services officer accountable to the principal assistant director of field work services, supported by team leaders. Team leaders supervised social work practitioners who comprised senior workers (level 3), main grade workers (level 2), a sprinkling of level 1 workers and a few welfare assistants.

All practitioners carried a case load. Although a large majority were generically orientated, there was ample evidence that they were allowed to have cases that accommodated their expertise and interest. Social work assistants, being untrained in social work, tended to concentrate on basic tasks of a fairly routine nature, so releasing the social worker for specific activities that require special knowledge and skill. Most team leaders were involved in working with cases, to what extent was a matter of choice or related to keeping a watching brief on clients whose usual social worker was absent from work for some reason. In addition to

their supervisory responsibilities team leaders were responsible for convening or chairing child care case conferences concerned with child abuse or neglect.

Hospital teams were supervised by principal social workers. These small teams which did not have team leaders were supervised by the principal social workers. Of the four teams, two shared a principal social worker and two had their own principal.

Practitioners in the Northumberland hospital teams who were viewed as specialists tended to sub-specialize, usually based on medical specialization or diagnosis. The principal social workers, while emphasizing their managerial role, did have contact with clients very much based on their availability or required involvement for policy reasons and for dealing with inter-professional difficulties, eg. social worker-doctor conflict.

Within the field work services section there were two significant management groupings. (1) There was the senior management group which involved the principal assistant director, the two field work specialist officers, the five area social services officers and the two hospital principal social workers. The function of this group which met monthly was to review the field work services performance and contribute to their development. (2) Area management meetings which consisted of the area social services officer and team leaders met for reasons similar to that of the senior management group but focusing mainly on area office performance.

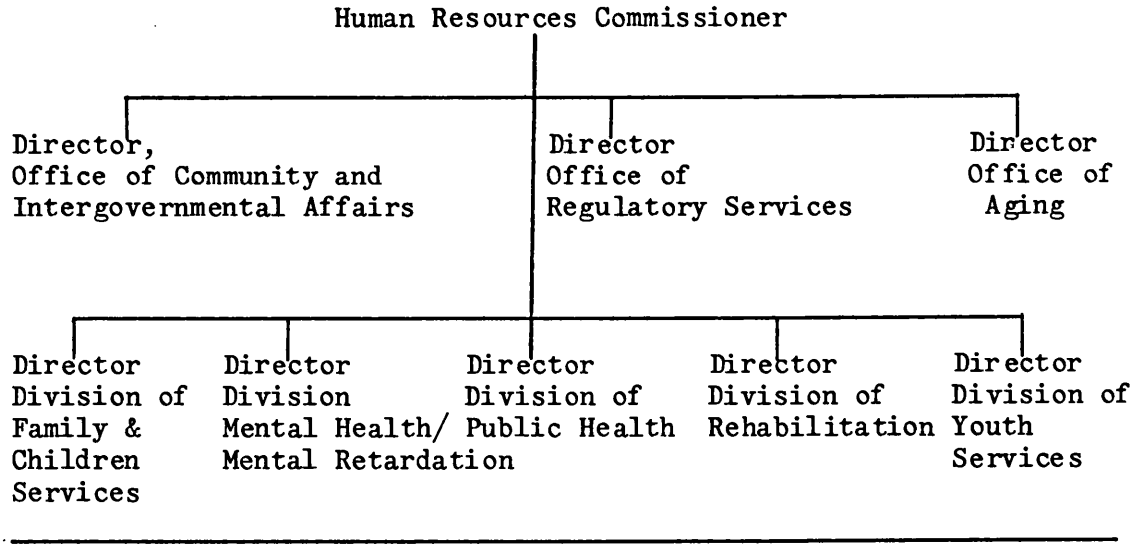
In the individual hospitals, principal social workers had regular meetings with their practitioners. Hospital team meetings were mainly concerned with professional practice issues with the principal social worker disseminating relevant management information to practitioners.

Georgia

The Georgia Department of Human Resources includes the Division of Family and Children Services within which the Child and Adult Protective Services operated - the subject of this study.

In 1972, the same year the Northumberland Social Services was established, the Georgia General Assembly passed the Governmental Reorganization Act which required the combination of the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health and Mental Retardation, Vocational Rehabilitation and what was to become in 1976 the Department of Family and Children Services and several other state programmes. Figure 2 identifies the present divisions and offices.

FIGURE 2. Structure of Georgia Department of Human Resources



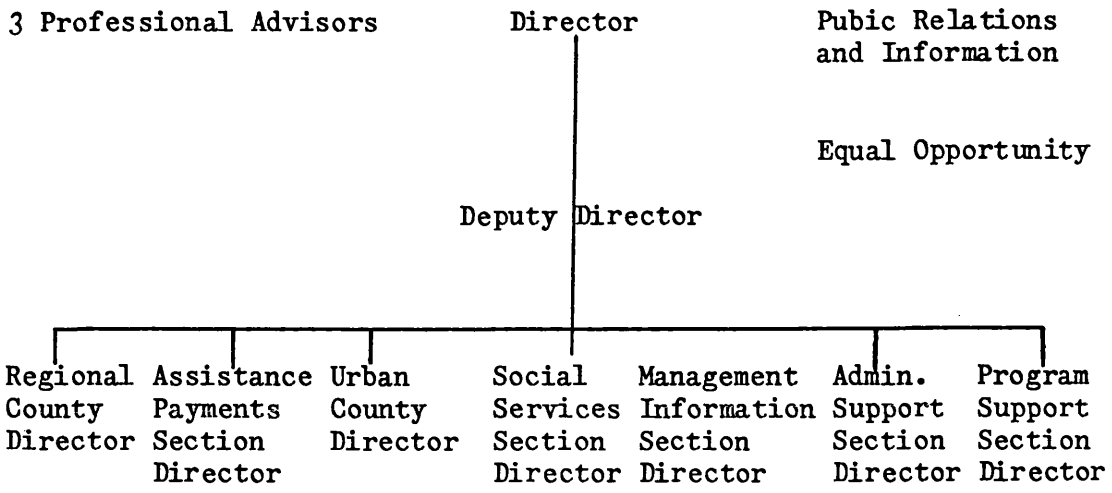
Unlike Northumberland's integrative approach to the reorganization of its social services based on a generic service delivery, Georgia adopted what might be described as a federated organizational structure. This enabled the various specialist agencies to continue operating their specialisms while retaining most of their established management and staffing structures. The significant difference was that agencies were made accountable to a higher management structure, the Department of Human Resources, with

their chief officers accountable to a commissioner. The commissioner was appointed by the governor and was answerable to the State Board of Human Resources who were also appointed by the governor and who were responsible to the state legislature. All the divisions were headquartered in the capital of Georgia.

The constituent bodies of the Department of Human Resources, such as the Department of Family and Children Services, deliver services to the 159 counties of Georgia. The state is largely rural, though there are several large concentrations of urban areas, one being the state capital which has risen rapidly to international status. In both the rural and metropolitan areas chronic poverty and associated problems were usually very evident, such as high levels of unemployment and homelessness and physical and emotional under-nourishment often reflected in poor physical and mental health with numerous socioeconomic difficulties. Families and individuals experiencing such distress form the bulk of the Department of Children and Family Services. client populations.

The director of the Division of Family and Children Services was appointed by the Commissioner to carry out mandates ensuring services to children and adults who have experienced abuse and neglect or are in need of protection. This responsibility was operationally manifested through two main categories of service delivery at county level. To enhance this process, the director and his county managers had access to professional advisors, including five service support sections. (See Figure 3). The professional advisors including a lawyer, and the five sections, while having responsibility for staff within their offices and sections had no line management control over county staff.

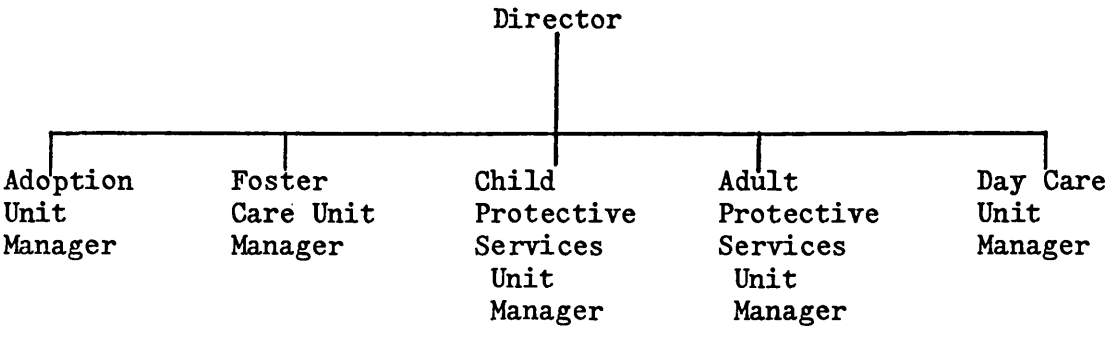
FIGURE 3. Structure of Division of Family and Children Services



Section managers were responsible for a number of specialist sub-units within their sections. Each unit had several specialist consultants who were accountable to a unit chief. The consultants were responsible for advising both headquarters staff and county staff on the maintenance and development of service deliveries.

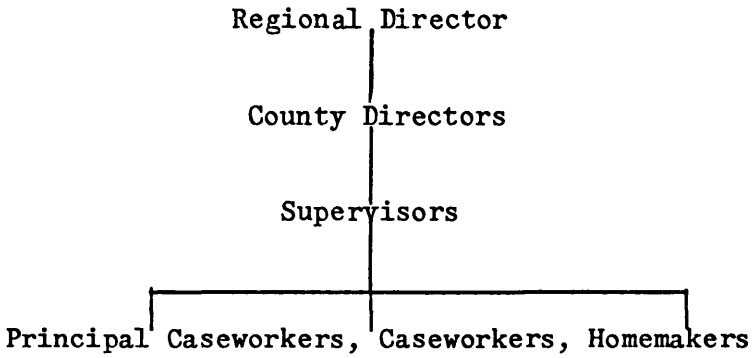
Figure 4 identifies the various sub-units of the social services section, which is responsible for offering consultative services to the child and adult protective services with which this study is concerned.

FIGURE 4. Structure of Social Services Section



For managerial and administrative purposes 150 of the 159 county Division of Family and Children Services offices were grouped into 9 multi-county regions. Each county within a region usually rural in character, had a county director who was responsible to a regional director, who had no deputy and was directly accountable to a divisional director. Figure 5 identifies the Division of Family and Children Services county regional structure (as it applies to Child and Adult Protective Services).

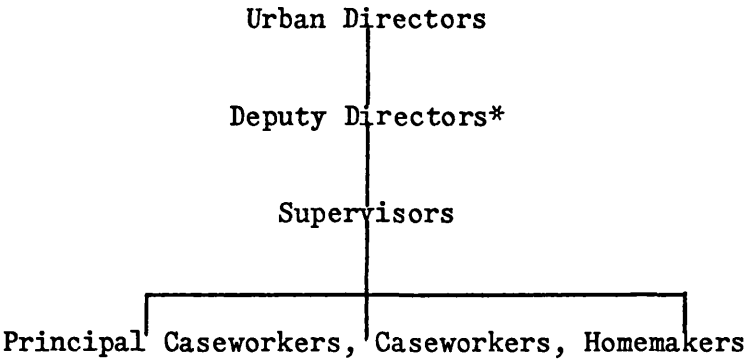
FIGURE 5. Department of Family and Children Services county regional structure



The remaining 9 counties were urban in character densely populated with all the socioeconomic problems associated with most metropolitan areas in the USA. The remaining 9 county departments of family and children services were under the direction of an urban county director (see Figure 6), supported by a deputy director, who was directly accountable to the divisional director.

Both urban and multi-county regional officers had, in addition to direct field staff, their own support staff such as programme directors and/or coordinators responsible for assisting with the monitoring and development of programmes such as child and adult protective services, and foster care and adoption services. These advisory staff were answerable to their respective urban or regional directors.

FIGURE 6. Department of Family and Children Services urban county structure



* 1 urban county in the study did not have a deputy director.

The supervisory level and direct service staff were allocated to county offices based on that county's population and the socioeconomic status and related problems. Supervisors, akin to the Northumberland team leaders supervised teams consisting of principal caseworkers, caseworkers, and in some instances, homemakers. Homemakers were not given complex cases - a somewhat similar status to that of the Northumberland welfare assistants.

The senior divisional management group of 16 comprising the director and his deputy, his seven headquarters advisory or support staff, the five section directors and a representative from each of the urban county and regional county director group. To maintain a manageable team meeting, the divisional director decided it was necessary to confine representation of the urban and regional directors groups to one person from each group. In order to maximize the involvement of all directors in the management group, representation at the meeting was based on a ratio system.

Urban county directors and regional county directors had their own office management meetings in addition to general staff meetings. Urban counties' attendance involved the director, deputy director, programme directors and supervisors. Regional meetings included the regional director, his advisory staff and the county director with his region.

Unlike the Northumberland Social Services who required a social work qualification for employment in the field work services division, Georgia Division of Family and Children Services did not require its field and related staff to hold professional social work credentials. The decision by the Division of Family and Children Services to waive professional requirements was a consequence of undertaking the declassification of the social services field and related posts following the Hayes Report in 1970. The report, to which the researcher was unable to gain access, was prepared by a private sector management consulting group who concluded after analyzing social work positions that qualified social workers did not carry out tasks and responsibilities that could not be undertaken by unqualified personnel.

Chapter 6.
ACCESS TO AGENCIES

Northumberland

My first contact with Northumberland Social Services Department was a telephone conversation with the Principal Assistant Director, Field Work Services Division, who I knew in a professional capacity. He was receptive to the study and suggested we meet. At this meeting in which I outlined my research proposals he agreed to support my two-part study subject to my discussions with two of his headquarters staff, his five area social services officers and two principal social workers who managed hospital teams.

During my first interview with the Principal Assistant Director to negotiate a study of social work staff in the Field Work Services Division, my suggestion that I meet with the Director of Social Services was received with hesitancy. From the tone of the Principal Assistant's references to the Director, I perceived that his relationship with him was not very positive. It emerged that the Director was viewed as not likely to be that interested in my project, being more attuned to preparing for his retirement within the next few months. I was to hear much later in the study from a manager that, had the Director not been retiring, he might have discouraged the study or denied its validity.

The Principal Assistant was aware that I had first known the Director some sixteen years previously when we had both worked for the same agency. Our association had been little more than formal and we had differing views on the purpose of social work and the supervision of staff.

During one of my discussions with the Principal Assistant, the Director entered the office without any prior warning. We reintroduced ourselves, neither of us referring to the past. The Principal Assistant informed him of my study and his response lacked interest, and having passed on information he left the room. During the period of the research I never saw the Director again.

The Principal Assistant Director was applying for the post and in doing so he was competing with a colleague who was the Principal Assistant Director of Residential Care. He wanted the position but felt unsure of his standing with the Director, adding he knew there were political forces which were not in his favour.

His further references to the Director took on more of a critical flavour. He acknowledged that overall morale throughout the department was poor, distrust was evident and workers had complained of feelings of ennui which he thought veiled much stress practitioners and managers were experiencing. In his opinion the Director's autocratic management style was at the root of many of the difficulties. The director was seen as a superficial individual who controlled the formal communication channels which were primarily a downward process and was more concerned with accommodating his Social Services Committee members that caring for his staff. Using the vernacular, the Principal Assistant Director said "I wouldn't trust the sod an inch.....you can't rely on what he says."

Certainly what the Principal Director was saying confirmed a number of negative remarks I had heard about the Director from social services staff in surrounding social services departments. However, it was obvious to me that my study proposals had precipitated a release of pent-up feelings.

The Principal Assistant Director admitted there were feelings of despair and cynicism within himself and he felt stressed out at times. He thought sometimes he has an ever-decreasing enthusiasm

for work in which he very much believed. He suggested a further meeting with his two headquarters management support staff, the principal field work officers for children and adult services.

At the second meeting there was general agreement that my study proposals should be submitted to the division management group meeting. This comprised the Principal Assistant Director, Principal Field Work Officer, Assistant Social Services officer and the Principal Social Workers. There was some further critical comment about the Director but more by allusion then direct statement.

The Principal Field Work Officer (adults) was the more defensive of the three directorate staff. His acceptance was based on numerous anecdotal references to the state of discontent among, and the unreasonableness of, field work staff who were never satisfied whatever the efforts of County Hall management. He admitted to feeling overwhelmed with his work load but "you have no option but to keep going." The other principal field work officer (children) was much more circumspect in his support for the study. He acknowledged the need for understanding the tension experienced by all levels of staff. There was a compelling need for better relations between field and County Hall. Much of what he felt was based on his working experiences in his area of expertise.

All three managers said that field work staff were overburdened and expected the situation to worsen as central government's increasing financial controls became more constricting. There was a general agreement that there were staff who were disillusioned, however it was suggested there were practitioners who came to social work with unrealistic expectations. One of the managers remarked "they're fed up with the job like most of us."

By the end of this meeting all three managers agreed to participate, hoping that the results would be useful in improving relationships in the division. There was full agreement that supervision of the research would be undertaken by Geoffrey Hutton, my supervisor, to whom I would be accountable.

My one-hour meeting with the divisional management team was chaired by the Principal Field Work Officer for adult services owing to the Principal Assistant Director's absence. As with the Principal Assistant Director, I knew several of the Area Social Services Officers and Principal Social Workers, having worked with them on educational projects unconnected with the Department.

It was clear from almost the beginning of the meeting that the Area Social Services Officers and Principal Social Workers approved of my project. They also agreed to participate in view of the smaller numbers of managers compared with team leaders and main grade social workers. Some reassurance on the question of confidentiality was necessary and how anonymity would be ensured in my findings. I assured them on this matter and promised to give a preliminary feedback to participants hopefully six months after data collection, which I did.

Several managers discussed the need for, and value of, independent observations on what were the organizational causes of stress. There was a shared view that while some of the causes were known, to have an objective view from an outsider would be helpful; "perhaps he will be listened to by those above."

For a major part of the meeting, managers tended to talk in generalities rather than being specific about their area team workings. I suspect this reflected an unwillingness to reveal too much in front of the two headquarters staff. There was a comment on the overburdened and stressed-out staff having to work with a continuous shortfall in resources due to central governments economic policies. There was a muted concern expressed that elected

representatives, especially the social services committee members, who, having forced budget reductions on the department, failed to defend workers from public criticism when service delivery was reduced. Because of the frequent public criticism of social workers, particularly in the popular media, anxiety levels were high among practitioners and managers whenever a suspected child abuse case was referred to an area team.

One area social services officer thought that the department had not been clear in identifying its mission and objectives and agreeing with divisional management teams how they should be translated into action. He acknowledged he was confused at times about management's expectations of him and if he felt this way how did practitioners feel. Having a clear understanding at all levels of the department's objectives and how they related to practitioners and managers he thought might reduce or even forestall stress. There was general agreement on this point and that the department must be seen to be as caring for staff as well as its clients.

Managers agreed to inform their staff of the research and allow those selected to participate on a voluntary basis. Owing to logistics, they were unable to agree to staff involved in part 1 of the research gathering together for a briefing session at County Hall. For me to visit each area office to talk to those workers selected for study would prove difficult because of practitioners being unable to synchronize their work schedules to accommodate me. They were sent letters. However, it was agreed that it would be possible to release the fewer numbers of participants in part 2 of the research to attend group discussion sessions at County Hall for a period of two hours each.

Georgia

As I was new to Georgia and having had no previous contacts with any of its social services departments, I approached the Social Work Department of the State University who suggested several senior staff in the Department of Human Resources. I was interviewed eventually by the Department of Human Resources chief and deputy chief of personnel who were quite encouraging about my proposed study. However, for some part of the interview they appeared to be more interested to hear how the British social services were operating and what the impact of government spending cuts were. They discussed in some detail the consequences of the "new federalism"' and its consequential impact on spending cuts. They were also very curious to knowing if British social services workers were in labor unions. When I replied that they were, indicating that even some Directors of Social Services joined associations, they raised their eyebrows, looking at each other, and dropped the issue. I was to learn later that Georgia public employees who join unions were frowned upon and 'marked' by their superiors. Those who joined did so for possible future protection, careful not to reveal their membership unless it was absolutely crucial for fear of intimidation from management or being "blackballed."

Both senior personnel managers explained that the Department of Human Resources inclined to specialist practices, for example mental health, but suggested that the Department of Family and Children Services would probably be closest to the Northumberland Social Services Department.

The deputy chief personnel officer gave me the name of a senior professional advisor to the divisional director of the Department of Family and Children Services. She agreed to 'ice break' by telephoning the individual who was a qualified social worker and long experienced in a wide variety of statutory social services.

At my first meeting with the recommended senior professional advisor, I was received well. Following a very detailed briefing on my study aims and expectations, she suggested that, of the five Department of Family and Children Services sections, the social services section within which the headquarters Child and Adult Protective Services operated, was quite similar to the Northumberland Field Work Services. Following my agreement she gave the authority, subject to staff agreement, to go ahead with the research. I later learned that she was one of three senior professional advisors. I also learned later that it was she, of the three, who had wide authority and the trust of the divisional director.

She agreed that my data collection instruments required cultural modifications and arranged for me to meet a Child and Adult Protective Services consultant and the Department of Family and Children Services personnel officer who would undertake this task, following which the agency would type and print the questionnaire.

In view of the geographical size of Georgia and its 159 counties, distance proved to be a physical limitation on the study. It was agreed that I would select two urban counties, one rural and one mixed (urban and rural) county within a 150 mile radius of the Georgia capital within which I lived.

My subsequent meetings with the advisor were warm, interesting and informative. It was very evident that every effort was being given to support my research. Rapport was developing well with the advisor and the consultant and the personnel officer. Word about my research had got around the state office (headquarters) and had stimulated much discussion.

Working with the personnel officer and the consultant on "Americanizing" my data collection instruments and familiarizing myself with the Department of Family and Children Services responsibilities by meeting other significant senior managers, did prove valuable when I began the formal interviewing.

I learned from the personnel officer and the consultant with whom I had a good rapport that what I saw in the Division of Family and Children Services was only surface behavior. There was a pervasive "unhappiness," morale was low. Workers often reported feelings of unease to their colleagues. In some ways their comments had a cryptic flavour. They were preparing me for some surprise information gathering when I began the interviews - they did!

During my third meeting at the Division of Family and Children Services I met with the Divisional Director who gave me a friendly reception. He held a theology rather than a social work degree, making some comment regarding some similarity of care purpose between social workers and an array of professionals including theologians! He welcomed my research, indicating that the findings would be useful as Child and Adult Protective Services county staff were under considerable pressure due to a combination of staff and financial constraints. We spent some time comparing service delivery styles in our two countries and the demise of public social work in America because of the rigorous financial constraints of the Reagan era. I was informed that a number of qualified social workers are now seeking positions in the private and corporate sector. He reminded me of something his senior professional advisor had told me, that a number of states including Georgia social services departments had declassified social work positions. This decision was based on the assumption that social work in state social services departments could be undertaken by non-qualified social workers. The division director was a bit defensive when we discussed the underlying issues of declassification - for example, the belief by qualified social workers that employing unqualified workers would keep salaries low

and push qualified workers into the private and corporate sector. He did not share the view that this would reduce the cost of state services and make it easier to control unqualified social workers with no professional standards and no code of ethics. Such a process could accelerate the politicalizing of statutory social services. This is where they would cease to be related to social policy and become integrated with instruments of a market-led economy. He suggested that those who took this view were over-stating their case of concerns. He appeared to weakly disagree and yet I felt he was being non-committal, perhaps even ambiguous.

He thought I should meet the Department of Human Resources Commissioner, to whom he was directly accountable, and explain my study. He would try to arrange this but could not guarantee an early appointment as the Commissioner was preoccupied with the many state and federal policy changes affecting the Department of Human resources. I never did get to meet the Commissioner, why I never knew. Several weeks later the Director on hearing I had not received an appointment suggested I should not pursue the matter further.

At this meeting the Divisional Director confirmed the outcome of my negotiations with his senior professional advisor. (1) The Child and Adult Protective Services of 4 counties (2 urban, 1 mixed, 1 rural) and relevant headquarters staff would be invited to take part in the research, (2) the senior professional advisor would telephone the counties selected for the research but it was to be my responsibility to initiate meetings and negotiate with the county directors, (3) I was to meet with the divisional management team to inform them of my proposed study and invite Child and Adult Protective Services headquarter's staff to participate, (4) all participation will be voluntary and undertaken during normal working hours. (5) confidentiality will be respected and that, once completed, the study would not be made public. (6) following the research write-up each participating county and headquarter's Child and Adult Protective Services staff would receive feedback on

generalities and not identification of individuals, (7) a letter identifying the legitimacy of my research was requested from my supervisor Geoffrey Hutton, University of Bath, (8) it was accepted that supervision and accountability for the research would rest with Geoffrey Hutton, my supervisor, (9) the use of departmental mail and telephone facilities for my research will be permitted.

At the monthly meeting to which I was invited, there was the divisional director (chairman) and his deputy, three senior professional advisors and legal assistant. The five Department of Family and Children Services divisional heads were present, including Social Services Child and Adult Protective Services throughout the state. Also present were two representatives of the county and regional directors. These managers attended on a rota basis to ensure all such directors at sometime attended a divisional management meeting. It was the responsibility of those directors to disseminate information of the meeting to their fellow directors.

The meeting was conducted in an informal manner, much similar to the Northumberland field work services management meetings. Following routine business which added little to my understanding of the Department of Family and Children Services, I was allocated a good half an hour to explain my proposed study. Few questions were asked which I thought reflected courteousness rather than substance. However, all present, except the county and regional directors who were not of the counties selected for my study, were willing to participate if selected.

As I anticipated, most members were interested in discovering how British social services operate and related problems. The ensuing discussions was both thoughtful and interesting with a good dash of humorous distractions. This experience was valuable in helping to establish a rapport with headquarters managers who might be in the study.

My initial contact with each of the three directors whose counties hopefully would agree to be in the study was by telephone. To prepare each director for our meeting I enclosed with a letter confirming the appointment an information sheet giving details of the research.

The meetings with individual county directors in their offices resulted in their willingness to participate providing their staff also agreed. There were several common issues raised by the four directors: financial restrictions, lack of well-trained staff, and emphasis on reducing the error rate on benefit payments which had led the Division of Family and Children Services to shift its resource emphasis from Child and Adult Protective Services to the benefit payments. Concern was also expressed that there was a communication gap with the head office - one director described this as fortunate because "they rarely had anything productive to say, only complaints or criticism."

One director who was due to retire very shortly was very open with me with her strong feelings about the Caucasian director married to a black woman and some of his cohorts, especially headquarters black managers whom she thought achieved their positions through influence rather than affirmative action/equal opportunity which she fully supported. Being a fully qualified social worker, she lamented the time that the Department of Family and Children Services declassified social work positions. "Professionalism no longer matters and we take almost illiterates off the streets with little commitment." I felt a little sad because whatever the status of her criticisms, here was a distressed individual who felt she had given her best to the agency, and the agency had not reciprocated by caring about her. The interview helped me to realize that while the other three directors had been mild in their concern about the Division of Family and Children Services, I was able to connect up some of their veiled comments with those of the outspoken director.

All four county directors agreed to inform Child and Adult Protective Services staff of the research and that, subject to their approval, I would meet with them in their respective offices. County directors agreed not to be present at the meetings in the interest of maximizing freedom of thought and exchange.

At the meetings I had with the Child and Adult Protective Services workers of the three counties involved in Part I of the study, I circulated a research information sheet. This contained some details on the purpose and procedures of the research. In two of the counties I was received with interest and enthusiasm. Overall the staffs were fairly uncritical, with the occasional generalized concern over financial constraints and that Child and Adult Protective Services staff were out of favor with both politician and the public. There were veiled criticisms that the state office undervalued their efforts under a difficult situation. Litigation was also a major concern of most of them. While a few said they probably would not participate, the majority in all three teams said they would take part if selected.

Interestingly, the staff of the director who complained bitterly about the Department of Family and Children Services were the most cautious and reticent of the three groups. While I was received courteously, I was aware that I was working very hard to establish a good rapport with them. Once I realized this, I relaxed and found a few of the staff began to reach out to me. For example, I was asked a number of searching questions about confidentiality and how British social workers coped with this facet of the research. About three quarters agreed to become involved in the study if selected. I did not learn until after this meeting that the director's professional advisor had been present. I was led to believe she was a supervisor. That helped explain some of the unease in the meeting.

I confirmed by letter a meeting arranged by telephone with the director of the fourth county I hoped would be in the study.

The director would arrange for me to meet with his Child and Adult Protective Services staff following my meeting with him. The director was considerately prepared for my first meeting with his having given much thought to the information I had sent him about the research. Following a stimulating exchange of ideas on my research methodology and the aims of the study and a brief description of the working of his office, I was introduced to his deputy and a group of Child and Adult Services workers. The director left the meeting, his deputy remained, a decision which had been made by the group earlier.

The meeting with the deputy director and supervisors and caseworkers who were to participate in Part II of the study was congenial and issues arising were low key. My research information sheet formed the basis for much of the discussion. Matters that arose in relation to Department of Family and Children Services and the Child and Adult Protective Services were a re-run of the previous three meetings. When I inquired who would be in the research if selected, several staff suggested because it involved group discussions and unlike the many people to be in part I, why couldn't all the staff be involved. They thought it only fair that "everyone should have a chance to pitch in." I accepted their suggestion, that other than administrative support staff should be free to attend a discussion meeting for two hours. Following the business meeting I was asked to give a resume on the British health and social services. With the deputy director's agreement, I was allocated 45 minutes for what turned out to be an enjoyable and exhausting session.

The director agreed to the proposed 2-hour discussion meeting provided I gave him at least one week's notice. He would not attend the next meeting either, because he wants staff to feel free to express their feelings and views. He said he would explain to the Child and Adult Protective Services staff so they would not misunderstand his actions. However, he did agree to an interview after the discussion meeting with his staff.

Chapter 7
FIELD WORK METHODS

I sought in my choice of the mix of data gathering instruments to maximize the effective and accurate gathering of information. I approached the design of the research with a knowledge of the concepts in the literature and with a sense of what was important from my own experience. I could not know in advance and did not want to predetermine in advance what could emerge. One approach to research is to use restricted questions, determining categories in advance, as with a questionnaire. While this may give convenience of analysis it is at the expense of restricting the possibility of new material emerging. For this reason, I wanted to use interviews and group discussions with a more open-ended approach.

I wished to use interviews because of own professional background, in which interviewing in all sorts of conditions was my stock in trade and I felt I had some competence. In individual interviews, even open-ended ones, there is more control by the interviewer than with group discussions. Groups have a life of their own. This gives plenty of chance for new material to come, but I knew it would present me with greater difficulty in analysis. I wished also to use a questionnaire to focus my thinking in advance and to reduce the judgments in analysis.

I considered using observation, but dismissed it because of the possibility that my presence would have led to contrived behavior due to my observing not only individual activities of workers but the interactions between co-workers and the hierarchy. I had little doubt that there would have been apprehension about the possibility of me seeing at first or close hand the manifestations of an array of sensitive personal and organizational issues.

The four methods I selected for the formal data collection were therefore focused interviews, a self-administered questionnaire, a self-report incident record, and single session discussion groups. The interview and group discussions were used for identifying and confirming those themes and trends evident in the questionnaire and self-report incident record.

While I have given prominence to the four formal methods of data collecting, I must not undervalue the knowledge gathered from other sources such as meetings and various conferences with both individuals and groups during the study. Several times during the early stages of the study I met with individuals managers to ensure that the logistics of my data collection were not causing worrying disruption of work flow. On a number of occasions, I was given insighful comments that ranged from thoughtful criticism to an indication of alienation and of some probably very 'hurt' and emotionally devastated individuals.

These contacts served as another valuable source for the later validation of my observations and conclusions. Especially on informal occasions, they allowed me a closer look at how some individuals operated within their own subjective inner worlds and how they sought to manipulate organizational systems to maintain a sense of control over aspects of a troubled self.

As indicated earlier, in Georgia I was asked to visit study sites to talk about the study. The interest I had in learning about American social services agencies was mirrored in the curiosity of the potential respondents about British social work. This proved to be an excellent rapport-builder, and cultivated an overall positive attitude, releasing information on a breadth of of issues about the agency and social work in general. Again, here was an experience that was eventually to prove somewhat of a treasure trove of information supporting my later findings. I was primarily a listener, being careful to avoid discussion that would influence their giving of data should they decide to participate in the study.

Meetings with Northumberland workers before and during the study, which were not part of the formal data collection, were not affected in the same way. There was some current knowledge of my social work occupations, though this did not affect these meetings adversely. The actual data collection was another scene.

Correspondence about the study was not a source of data in itself because it was principally one-sided. I did most of the writing about the research arrangements and related matters e.g. confirming meetings and telephone conversations. Both agencies when wanting to contact me did so usually by telephone. This reluctance to write is open to various justifiable speculations, but one major factor appeared to be the problem of time pressures. It's easier to pick up the telephone. So this situation is telling something apart from the absence of correspondence.

Interviews

Interviewing on an individual basis has its specific and particular advantages, identified by Stewart and Cash (1982). The interviewer is able to explain, probe, clarify and establish rapport between himself and respondent. Being able to observe the respondent's verbal and body reactions can indicate the depth and reliability of response. Most important, with anonymity assured, interviewing has proven to be a valuable instrument for gathering information on sensitive and emotional topics which might be too threatening for the respondents to write themselves - a point which will become apparent when the results of interviews and questionnaires are discussed later.

The disadvantage of costs and time in using interviews can be significant. However, in my study these were considerably eased by having study sites within easy travelling distance of my home. The expenses involved was were more than compensated for by the richness of the data gained.

I used a semi-structured approach based on a recording schedule (see Appendix A) with open-ended questions for discovering workers views and feelings about organizational factors that caused stress. I was influenced by the similarities of two methods, the "focused interview" (Merton, Fisk and Kendall 1956) which had facets similar to Moser's (1968) "guided interview" and Levinson's "biographical interview" (1977). Levinson's method is similar to the "personological interview" which has its origins in the qualitative-naturalistic approach (Willems and Raush 1969). I drew from these two approaches because they enhance (1) data gathering when both interviewer and interviewee were similarly informed about the focus of the interview and (2) the evaluation of rich spontaneous feelings and attitudes.

The flexibility of this qualitative and semi-structured approach to interviewing facilitated my efforts to establish a general level of mutual confidence and productive interaction between the worker and myself while enabling me to maintain the purpose and direction of the interview. Also with the assurance of anonymity, the respondents were able to be active rather than passive. By my centering on the subjective perceptions of respondents, they were able to define, unrehearsed, their own responses to questions which also encouraged them to both challenge and remedy my biases and misconceptions. This was evidenced by the willingness of the majority of respondents to share their candid idiosyncratic thoughts and feelings regarding very sensitive matters which they would be too threatened to put down on paper. I was able to 'hear' their feelings while observing their non-verbal reactions which indicated depth of responses. Finally, the interview method permitted me the opportunity to repeat and clarify questions and probe for more specific answers.

The administration of a structured schedule ensured that the same open questions, which formed the core of the interview, were asked of all respondents. The focused interview approach encouraged respondents to talk freely about their subjective experiences and

facilitated the interviewer's exploration and understanding of these while he maintained the purpose and direction of the interview. Respondents were permitted to interpret the words "stress" and "organizational factors." Social services workers, like other human services professionals, usually define stress with latitude of meaning. Therefore, to have defined stress and organizational factors may have prevented spontaneity of response, denying respondents the opportunity of sharing their own personalexperiences of what they felt to be organizational stressors.

Interviewing by tape recording was a method I liked because of the opportunity of easy access to a permanent accurate record of what respondents said. This method would have eased the emotional pressure and physical fatigue inherent in recording by the pen. However, owing to the uneasiness I detected about tape recording interviews during my negotiations for access to workers, it would have been unwise for me to have tried to force the issue. I might have lost the little willingness to be involved in the study. The concerns are general to the use of tape interviews. A lasting record of what is said on tape is a worry to many people. Attempts to assure the individuals that records will be destroyed after the study does not necessarily ease anxiety, more especially when it involves sensitive issues which the research would certainly touch upon.

The Interview Schedule comprised four open questions. The first two questions sought to discover what the respondents saw as the main stress experiences in their work and what were their origins. Questions 3 and 4 were more specifically about the part which may be played by training and staff development in handling stress.

The interview format required that when the interview had been completed, each participant was invited to ask questions or to raise any issues relevant to the study.

Following the conclusion of the interview, I assessed and rated

(a) degree of rapport and understanding

(b) degree of acceptance,

(c) mood of the interviewee.

Questionnaire

I rejected the use of a mailed questionnaires because having had the individual direct contact by interview, I thought it would be more appropriate to give the questionnaire at the end of the interview, to be completed later. Maintaining a personal touch to the study would allow me to telephone familiar individuals to ensure the return of most if not all questionnaires, as mailed questionnaire response rate can be as low. Also the time spent in sending out several reminders regarding the non-returned questionnaire can frustrating and time consuming.

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) used in the study was a combination of the influence of Levinson (1972 p. 530 - 538) and my own thinking. Using a questionnaire as a data gathering instrument has several advantages - economy, ease of administration and efficiency in collecting large amounts of data.

The first ten questions sought to gather information encompassing job identity, hierarchical position, full or part-time employment, qualification status, office or team location, length of time in agency and current post, age and gender. The remaining 33 questions served to elicit participants feelings about their work environments.

The main topics were taken from the literature and from my own experience. From the literature I identified in Chapter 2 the categories of work overload, role ambiguity and role conflict, work relations, supervision and support, and physical conditions.

Questions about these, with the exception of lack of participation and role ambiguity were put into the questionnaire. Later, the interviews showed the importance of difficulties in role definition and relations, which reminded me that I had undervalued their importance in omitting it from the questionnaire. It appeared to me that lack of resources was such an endemic feature of social service agencies that though this proved to be a major topic of discussion it would be a redundant question for the questionnaire.

Thirty-two questions were closed with structured response alternatives, somewhat similar to 'cafeteria' type scales (True 1983). The two remaining questions were open-ended, asking respondents to list three things they most-liked and disliked about their job.

The responses were coded and analysed on computer using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).

Self-report incident record

A self-report form was designed to enable respondents to report incidents they interpreted as a stress experience. This method of self reporting was used because it has been shown to be a reliable method (Walsh 1967) for accessing behavior which would be difficult if not impossible to achieve by direct sampling techniques. In this instance it was the respondent's immediate personal experience of work-felt stress.

The incident recording (see Appendix C) contained twelve questions. The first six questions required factual information, such as the date and time of the stress incident, its location, the date and time the incident was recorded and who was present at or during the reported incident. The remaining six questions were open-ended, and asked people to describe the incident, why stress was occuring, what their feeling were, and what could be done about it.

Some of the difficulties in using the self-report incident record are similar to those associated with the self-administered questionnaire. There is the apprehensiveness among respondents that sensitive information they reveal on paper may become public and used to their disadvantage. I aimed to ease this concern by assuring workers of confidentiality and anonymity in the write up of the findings. Because of possible survey saturation, particularly in the American agency, there was the possibility that respondents were 'questionnaire wise' and might be blase or feed me with information they think I want to hear, honest or otherwise. Respondents were told that there was no right or wrong answers and that the success of the study was dependent on their being as frank or forthright as possible. In the completion of the incident documentation interviewer bias was overcome by my absence when the respondent recorded their experiences. Comments about the time for completion of the incident records was anticipated by acknowledging participants busy commitments but how valuable their contributions would be to furthering the aims of the research. In an endeavor to reduce the possible influence of others, such as colleagues and friends, in their responses respondents were asked to record only their interpretation of their views and experiences.

In the event, there was a disappointingly low response rate from both agencies. This was unexpected, as I was anticipating good returns in view of the excellent response to both the questionnaire and individual interviews.

Of the 72 (3 sets per person) inventories given to the Northumberland population, sixteen were returned from ten respondents, six practitioners, two team leaders and two managers. There were 159 (3 sets each) distributed to the Georgia participants of which 31 were returned, seventeen incomplete. Respondents were in the main, practitioners and consultants.

Generally, the data provided were sketchy, but proved of some interest for illustrative purposes. The explanation for the low return rate may be the length and detail the incident record. Respondent in both agencies remarked on the time consumption and the detail required to complete it. However, influenced by the interview interviews, I believe it also likely that the inventory proved too threatening for most respondents to place their views and feelings about themselves and their agency on paper.

Single session discussion groups

These small groups comprised an organizational cross-section of those workers who were not interviewed individually. The primary purpose was for participants to discuss those key organizational factors that caused them stress. The trends and themes that emerged would be compared those that arose from the other data collection methods.

The use of group discussions was an economical way in time and money for both agency and interviewer to bring together a cross section of busy workers. Groups can, by their interactive process, disclose not only specific factual information, but reveal much about the humanity and the general climate of the work place.

The written agenda for the groups was a modification of the individual interview schedule. I acted as group coordinator, supported by a reporter with whom I had had briefing sessions regarding the purpose of the study and my expectations of the recording process.

1. What do you see as the key agency stresses in your work and why do you think they exist?
2. How should your agency help you cope with the stresses you have identified?
3. What are the "pros and cons" of working for your organization?

The presence of a recorder, who was from outside of the study sites, helped to reduce bias from my facilitator's role. Having another person to take notes as well as myself enabled the sharing of observations within the agenda format that allowed us to share our observations to maximize accuracy of reporting.

To ease the possibility of slow interaction and rapport which might impair the quality of discussion, before the meetings began light refreshments were available, allowing participants to mingle. Although most participants knew of one another, brief self-introductions were made at the start of the discussions. In groups of this type issues concerning group tension and trust are a problem due to the of nature of the subject, and that participants came from different hierarchical levels with a network of affiliations outside the group. This was handled by my openly acknowledging this possible scenario and saying that participants were free to decide their own level of contribution. A problem common to this kind of group discussion is how to balance the level of negative dialogue between participants, particular between different positional levels. The benefit of having a recorder to undertake the recording of the discussion frees me to deal with any process occurrences that might be a threat to individual participants as well as the flow of the discussion.

SELECTION OF RESPONDENTS

To facilitate comparison of the grades and titles of Northumberland and American interviewees whose position title were dissimilar I used following format.

TABLE 1. American and British social work title equivalents

Compatible Category	American	British
Practitioner	Caseworker, Casework Principal Community Worker	Social workers levels 1, 2, & 3 Social Work Asst.
Supervisor	Supervisor and Senior Supervisor	Team Leaders
First-line Management	Director (State Office) County Progrm Dir County Director (rural)	No equivalent
Middle Management	Urban County Dir Regional County Dir (rural)	Area Soc Serv Off
Senior Management	Program Director Personnel Dir. Prof. Asst. Divisional Dir. of DFCS	Principal Asst Dir FWSD, Prin Fieldwk Officers
Consultants	Consultants	No equivalent

Northumberland

The population for the study in Northumberland was confined to field services practitioners, and managers who were directly concerned with community service delivery. This involved five area teams, four hospital teams and three County Hall managers. Area field work services support staff, home helps, occupational therapists and administrative personnel were not included in the study.

Access to the Social Work Department's personnel staff lists revealed that 134 staff in the field work services division were relevant to the two-part study - see Table 2. Of the 134 staff, there were ten managers relevant to the study, although one did not take part. The other nine agreed to participate in the research. The remaining 124 consisted of 17 team leaders, 91 social workers and 16 welfare assistants.

For the programme of individual interviews and questionnaires, which included the headquarters managers, I chose three of the five area teams and two of the hospital teams. I shall refer to this programme as Part 1. The remaining two area and three hospital teams were allocated to the group discussion programme, which I shall call Part 2.

As indicated earlier the hierarchical position of the County Hall managers necessitated their involvement in Part 1, whereas the area and hospital team managers and their staff were dependent on the outcome of random selection for deciding which part of the study in which they would be placed.

For Part I, staff inventories, identifying incumbents by name, post, sex, age, length of service and work location were used to achieve a fair representation of work groups, team leaders, practitioners and welfare assistants. Forty workers were chosen to be invited to participate.

The area officers, the hospital principal social workers and the selected staff were sent letters explaining the purpose of the study. These letters invited voluntary participation, assured anonymity and that data collection would be undertaken during normal working hours. Enclosed with each paper was a prepaid reply asking subjects to indicate if they wanted to accept or decline participation.

At first, nineteen did not reply. Reminder letters produced the final figures shown in Table 2, with twenty three refusals, no replies or absences from work, and twenty four taking part.

TABLE 2. Northumberland: participants in interview and discussion

Position	Grade	Location	Staff total	Inter-view	Group
Prin Asst Dir	Snr manager	County Hall	1	1	
Fieldwk Serv Off	Snr manager	County Hall	2	1	
Area Soc Serv Off	Mid manager	5 Area Offices	5	3	2
Prin Soc Wkr	Mid manager	4 Hospital Teams	2	1	1
Team Leader	Supervisor	Area Teams	17	4	2
Social Worker	Practitioner	Area/Hosp. Teams	91	12	9
Welfare Asst	Pract Aide	Area Teams	16	2	2
Totals			134	24	16

Part 2 which involved single session discussion groups, comprised the remaining two area teams and the two hospital teams. These formed a population from which the discussion group members would be drawn, of two area social services officers, one principal social worker, six team leaders, 35 practitioners and five welfare assistants. With the exception of the 2 area officers and 1 principal social worker, random sampling was based on the approach used for Part 1 of the study.

As in Part 1, management staff, having volunteered their involvement in the study, did not receive letters inviting participation. However, the other three work categories whose selection was based on achieving a proportional representation were divided into two groups of eight which included managerial staff.

Georgia

The relevant staff of the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services was limited to county and relevant headquarters staff concerned with the Division of Child and Adult Protective Services in four counties. Administrative, clerical and janitorial staff were not included in the study.

Although the Divisional Director and his 3 senior professional advisors had wide responsibilities concerning other sections of the Division of Family and Children Services, their inclusion in Children and Adult Protective Services policy and monitoring justifies their inclusion in the research. The deputy director declined to participate because of having been appointed immediately prior to the study. Having arrived from an educational institution, her knowledge of Division of Family and Children Services was rather scanty.

Due to the geographical size of Georgia and the proliferation of counties (ie 159), I decided to select four counties within approximately 150 miles radius of the capital of Georgia. Two urban counites and one rural were chosen for Part 1 and one county with a mixture of rural and urban for Part 2.

As in Northumberland, I chose to interview all the relevant managers of Georgia's headquarters and the four selected counties. They all volunteered their participation.

Personnel staff lists identified workers comprising 118 supervisors, practitioners and headquarters consultants from which a stratified random sample was taken for involvement in Part 1. Unlike Northumberland, ethnicity was an important factor to be considered, in addition to position, gender, age, length of service and work location, in the sampling. Eighty one workers were selected to take part.

The procedures for inviting selected participants resembled that used in Northumberland. Letters were mailed to county personnel, (i.e. supervisors and caseworkers) inviting participation based on assurances of anonymity and that data collection would be undertaken during normal working hours. Each letter contained a prepaid reply inviting subjects to indicate their willingness or unwillingness to take part in the research. After reminder letters to those who did not at first reply, there remained 28 refusals or no replies from the original 81. The results are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Georgia: participants in interview and discussion

Position	Grade	Location	Staff total	Inter-view	Group
Divisional Dir	Snr manager	Headquarters	1	1	
Prof assistant	Snr manager	Headquarters	3	3	
Section Dir	Snr manager	Headquarters	2	2	
Unit Chief	Mid manager	Headquarters	2	2	
Consultants	Consultants	Headquarters	15	10	
Urban County Dir	Mid manager	County	2	2	
Regional Dir	Mid manager	Region	1	1	
County Dir*	First line	County	2	1	
Deputy Dir	First line	County	3	1	1
Programme Dir	First line	County	1	2	
Supervisors	Supervisory	County	30	8	2
Caseworkers	Practitioners	County	91	20	13
Totals			153	53	16

* accountable to the Regional Director

The members of the discussion groups, as a consequence of negotiations with the deputy director and Children and Adult Protective Services workers in the fourth county, were not known until the actual day of the event. Excluding the director, for reasons referred to earlier, the potential membership was nineteen, comprising the deputy director, two supervisors and sixteen caseworkers including two community workers. In the event, it was the Deputy Director, both supervisors and thirteen of the practitioners who attended.

Representativeness of the respondents

The methods used for the selection of respondents achieved, in spite of refusals, the purpose of ensuring a fair represention of all groups of workers in the two agencies.

I found that, in general, the Americans showed more interest that the British at the time of the selection for possible participation. Indeed, all the staff of the fourth Georgia county asked to be allowed to take part in the group discussion. This may have been due more than one factor. From my experience, Americans appear to be more forthcoming than the British, and hence less research shy. Yet in the light of the findings it appears that the research meetings well have been seen by the Georgian workers as an opportunity to vent highly restrained frustrations to a 'safe person', i.e. a stranger who knew nothing of their work histories.

It may have been the cultural reserve attributed to the British which accounted for the Northumbrians' emotional reticence when invited to take part in the study. Of course, it could also have been that some workers of the agency rememembered me as a social work educator and, at the time of the study, knew of me as a manager in a neighbouring social servies department. This could have impinged on willingness to be involved in the study.

However, from the data gathered from the people I saw, these factors did not seem to impair the purpose of the study. I have no doubt that my interviews and group discussions did pick up the odd institutional wailer and griper (and I suspect in one case, a barrack room lawyer). Nonetheless, I am confident that the information gleaned about the tensions, anxieties and stress, and the emotional and disabling consequences for individual workers is very reliable. I was enabled to make credible observations on the organizational dynamics of the two agencies, which is my primary focus.

PART III

FINDINGS FROM FIELD STUDIES

Chapter 8
AN OVERVIEW

Both the agencies were negative and lacking in vitality. However, the strength of disaffection in the American setting, particularly indicated in the interviews, was characterized by a greater volubility than in the British agency. This reflects a likely cultural influence in that Americans are often viewed as more forthcoming with their feelings, while the British are seen as being more reticent. While I believe this to be so, there was little doubt that Children and Adult Protective Services workers were experiencing a greater concentrated burden of anxieties than the Field Work Services workers in Northumberland, which caused their feelings to be more highly susceptible to ventilation. In both settings there was evidence that many of those interviewed were functioning at considerable cost to their own well-being, but again the depth of perturbation appeared to more severe among Georgia employees.

I found, interestingly, the faint evidence of a mercurial hope among some British workers that "perhaps it will get better," and "they (being central government) won't get in next time." American interviewees were not as revealing of such hopes. It might have been that American social services staff feelings of optimism were encapsulated from view by their despondency. This mood, I suspect, reflects a sense of hopelessness that state social services in Georgia will not improve until Americans abandon their traditional sacred emphasis on individualism at the expense of the well-being of the community.

In Britain and various parts of western Europe, public welfare services were founded on the influence of collectivism and therefore are more institutional, in the sense that the provision of welfare services is taken up by the State as a right. In America

the public welfare services are primarily residual in nature, in the sense that they are seen as a safety net with the overtones of charity. Because of this, British social workers, unlike their American counterparts, had the opportunity of developing an affinity, however tenuous at times, with a welfare state thinking public as happened in Britain following World War II. In other words, Georgia social workers entered public social work with little positive endorsement from the general populace that what they did was seen as a worthy productive contribution to the community. For example, in Britain a poll showed that the percentage of Britons willing to fund public services with the result of higher taxes went from 37% in 1979 to 63% in 1985. (Economist, May 1985.), whereas, in America according to the Boston Globe (1985) it would take a major catastrophe to gain citizen support to fund public services adequately.

Many of the Americans I interviewed appeared collectivist in thought, admiring a little too uncritically and unknowledgeable both the British and Scandinavian social services. They saw them as the solution "to many of our social problems". "It's greed that prevents us from going European." One respondent claimed that the "non-provision of a welfare state on the grounds that we are heterogeneous is a cop-out." Another remarked that "the corporate state will always win over a welfare state in the USA."

Not all Child and Adult Protective Services respondents were that enthusiastic about the European institutional model of welfare. Some were clearly unsympathetic and were convinced that the provision of comprehensive state services were a disincentive to the long-term development of the individual, "to be cosseted by free handouts is undermining of self-responsibility." One person pointed to Britain's economic decline as due to too much of the welfare state which smothers self-reliance. This remark was reflected in several workers complimenting Margaret Thatcher on bringing about the recovery of the British economy. There was one senior manager who said "from the womb we are fed self-reliance and

self-interest...of course it has become part of our life and there is something in this philosophy I am sure." I have no doubt these respondents were genuine in their criticism of a welfare state system. There were, however, a few who were downright hostile towards their clients and were unable to explain the negativeness toward them other than most of them were undeserving. I felt that several of these practitioners were disillusioned and exhausted and perhaps in various stages of burnout. I did find disillusionment and exhaustion among Northumberland workers, but not the deeply entrenched resentment toward clients to be found in Georgia.

I found Georgia bureaucracy was more rigid and more highly regulating of staff and there appeared to be a greater awareness by managers and supervisors in Child and Adult Protective Services than by their peers in Northumberland of manipulating the worker to preserve the status quo. The Northumberland bureaucracy, while having its rules and regulations, seems more dominated by the decisions of senior managers at County Hall, particularly the Director of Social Services, than rules and regulations. Managers in Georgia and Northumberland, a majority having been social work practitioners at one time, had been promoted without either supervisory or management training. The American managers, while more forthcoming with information in interviews than the British, were generally more cautious in their criticisms of the political system. The British manager appeared much more at ease when discussing local political issues and political systems in general. This difference probably reflects a wider political awareness among British managers and the more secure job tenure they enjoy. Several of the State Office top managers in Georgia do not have job protection. Although the middle managers and other lower level staff had job protection, they remained insecure about their career opportunities if openly critical of the system.

Supervisors and team leaders carry out the same functions in the same agencies (to supervise teams of direct service workers or practitioners). In Northumberland, all supervisors hold social work

qualifications, whereas that is not the case in Georgia. But both groups have had little if any training for supervision.

American practitioner teams did not seem to have the collegiality and commitment to a common purpose as did the British; this may be due to the larger teams in Georgia. The American workers seemed in such despair over the general climate that it really upset me to see such a waste of resource.

In the following chapters, I present the detailed information from the formal interview programme (individual interviews, follow-up questionnaires and incident inventories, and group discussions). Organizational factors which can give rise to stress fall into three main groups:

arising from the work itself: for example work overload;

arising from the conditions of work and employment, physical conditions, employment policies and promotion prospects, and particularly in the case of Georgia, physical danger and the risk of litigation;

arising from the organizational context: work relations, supervision and support, conflicts arising from lack of resources, and organizational climate including the concern for lack of participation.

The results of the study show that generally the British and the American social workers perceived similar organizational factors as causing them to feel stress, though there were clear differences in certain features of the work organization, in people's orientation to work, and in the way they discussed the issues.

Chapter 9
NORTHUMBERLAND

Of those interviewed in the Northumberland Social Services Field Work Division, a few were a little circumspect in what they had to say while the others were generally very receptive, open and informative.

County Hall management were straightforward in what they had to say with the occasional hint of wariness while middle managers (area social service officers) on the whole were more free with sharing of information. Team leaders and practitioners were forthcoming but with the practitioners being much less timid in their criticisms of the Division. Interviewees revealed a variety of emotions ranging from those diffident or reticent few to the critical and passionate.

Both discussion groups were held in a conference room at County Hall on the same day in order to facilitate comparison of the groups' content and climate. To have had too much of a time lag between the group sessions may well have impaired my capacity for "feeling comparison" between the climates of the two groups. Much of their content, direction and emphasis were similar.

Although members of the two groups were from different offices, within each group the majority knew one another. Those few who didn't, overcame any diffidence through introduction and as the discussion progressed. While each group comprised a mixture of hierarchical positions (ie practitioners, team leaders, middle managers, area social services officers and principal hospital social workers) the discussion was more forthright than I expected. Even so, it quickly became evident that when discussing the existence of organizational stress in their respective area or hospital teams they were not inclined to show much feeling. They

were avoiding exposing their various teams to a 'feeling' analysis, specifically in terms of criticism. In other words, they avoided 'standing on one another's toes.' However, when discussing County Hall much emotion was generated with alliances of subordinates and superiors criticizing senior management as generators of most organizational stress. Whenever, I tried to find out if area and hospital teams were experiencing their own peculiar stresses, there was an acknowledgement that there were differences of opinion, with a somewhat mild comment on the ensuing tension, but quickly the discussion moved away from polite neutrality to negative feelings about County Hall.

The Director of Social Services was not in the study, but frequent direct and implied reference to him by group members overshadowed any mention of his Principal Assistant Director in charge of the Field Work Services Division. Viewed as a "committee man" who looked after himself, he was seen as being the cause or aggravator of a number of organizational stresses identified by the group. There were also several occasions when the group referred to County Hall managers (the Director of Social Services, Principal Assistant Director and Principal Field Work Officers) as "them", "them at County Hall" or just "County Hall."

THE WORK ITSELF

Overload and its relation to resources

In the literature on stress, and indeed on job stress research into a variety of occupational settings, overload is seen as a dominant stressor. This appeared strongly in the interviews and discussions, and is confirmed in the questionnaire responses. These are summarized comparatively in Chapter 11. From the 24 Northumberland respondents, we see that half recorded that they worried 'about having too much to do in a day's work' always or frequently. Of the others, only three reported 'rarely'. Two thirds also reported that they thought the Department expected too much of them.

The term work overload was used by practitioners to cover direct work and non-direct work with clients, whereas team leaders and managers applied its use to administrative tasks and staff supervision. Overload was considered by about 65 per cent of those interviewed to be the most stressful aspect of their jobs. "The work load is too much to fit into the day." "It (work) never stops increasing; you go on and on." "The bombardment (work) never lets up. From top to bottom (of the office) every one is under constant pressure." A number of workers made catching remarks to the effect that often the critical "pressures" were experienced when one had to handle the consequences of the shortage of time and resources and the unabating workloads concurrently.

A cross section of workers talked of the impact of the arduous work loads on their mental health indicating that they were struggling with emotional and sensory overload. Reference was made to being "anxious and worrying all the time about doing a good job." Similar comments related to concerns about "difficulty in sleeping;" "loss of patience" with clients and colleagues. "Little things get you down." Workers referred to trying to keep a sense of proportion, wondering how much longer they could cope with the situation. There were those whose overload "stress" (and) worries

"were manifested in physical symptoms ranging from general malaise, headaches, muscle tension to gastrointestinal symptoms.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they were satisfied with the time the work allowed them for personal life. Only a quarter responded as "dissatisfied". The tendency was to complain more about psychological rather then than physical or temporal intrusions into private life.

It is to be expected that a sense of having insufficient knowledge and skill to do their job would generate stress. In the questionnaire, people were asked if they felt this. All responded "always" or "frequently". The interviews confirmed the disquiet that was felt. In this connection, when asked how much on training on the job had been provided, only a third said it was adequate, while a quarter said it was minimal. This lack of training was spread across all levels and groups. One worker said she never received training "unless my orientation about the Department when I arrived was training for the job". Another said "often I can't make sense of what I'm doing because I don't know what I'm doing".

Well over half of all those interviewed saw a clear relation between quantitative and qualitative overload. They also understood the conflict that can and does occur between the two, owing to the prevailing circumstances "in all social services, not just us." However, in percentage terms practitioners mentioned more frequently than other groups the issue of quality service. The terms "worried," "despondent," and "troubled" were used when practitioners said that already the quality of work was suffering because of increasing overload. This situation placed them in a double bind. On the one hand the "public criticize for poor quality of service (and on the other) "they will not give sufficient resources to do the job properly.

Uncertainty is an integral and accepted part of a practitioner's role. Since the resource crisis of the early 80's, uncertainty has served to worsen the stress of work overload. For example, with heavy caseloads, practitioners must give extra close attention to organizing daily visiting schedules. Under these circumstances "when a crisis blows" daily schedules go awry, adding further to the backlog of uncompleted work. This predicament is not excusable according to County Hall who are viewed by most area staff as not wanting to see or hear the truth. "To admit the truth might put them in a fix .... They would have to do something about it." The effects of chronic backlog at practitioner's level impacts on the hierarchy, possibly causing tension between the supervisor and practitioner and between supervisor and area officers who have to account to County Hall for work accumulation.

A further pressure on social work staff is coping with the progressive dilution of services leading to continuing prioritizing that barely allows for adequate crisis intervention and prevention work with non-accidental injury. Several in the group saw it necessary to cut corners (bypass rules, regulations and procedures) to save time and "hope as a consequence a case doesn't explode. If it does, it's your fault and you'll probably get no support from County Hall."

Practitioners were concerned that while the consequences of overload were acknowledged by managers they appeared "helpless to take any constructive action." Most of the practitioners were more critical of County Hall than of area management for the inaction and "lack of concern" about overload. There was a belief that the dominant obstruction to dealing with overload had more to do with the Director of Social Services than with the Principal Assistant Director of the fieldwork section who was thought to "have little opportunity to do his own thing." Some area managers were viewed as emotionally distancing themselves from the trying situations and predicaments of practitioners because "they aren't able to deal with them. I'd be the same; they get no support from them" (County Hall).

For team leaders, overload stress was from four directions. Firstly, their own work responsibilities especially in an expansion of child care work, e.g. organizing and chairing of case conferences and a more intense and sustained involvement in abuse and neglect cases with more emphasis on interdisciplinary relations. Secondly, the decrease in resources requires that even more time is spent in their role as "gatekeepers" in examining the requests of their practitioners for resources for clients. In addition, they see practitioners as "deserving more support than they get because of our work loads." Thirdly, the increasing work expectations that are seen to flow from the continuing work expansion of area officers. Lastly, concern that "as things get worse" they will increasingly feel caught between those expectations of practitioners and those of managers. It appeared that what they were apprehensive about was "an overload of negative feeling," having to absorb a greater amount of criticism from increasingly frustrated workers.

Team leaders claim that their overload stress reactions are aggravated by the increasing responsibility for organizing and administering of non-accidental injury conferences and reviews. This additional work without adequate secretarial and clerical resources is often undertaken at the expense of their supervisory and routine responsibilities. The absence of sufficient secretarial and administrative resources were seen as an important factor by the two groups in amplifying "stressed out feelings" because reports, reviews and letters are presented late and for which the individual concerned is held responsible.

Managers in the areas and hospitals feel overstretched and wonder to what extent their staff realize how difficult it is being caught in the middle between County Hall management and area or hospital staff. Concern was voiced that few understood the what and why of area officers weighty responsibilities. Tasks and activities present as discrete, separate and sequenced events which appear undemanding. They are so intertwined and complex that often failure to accomplish one task influences the outcome of other tasks.

Concern was voiced that, as excessive amounts of work are undertaken by practitioners, team leaders and managers their performance becomes erratic and "you doubt your ability to do a good job." This creates a mixture of guilt and annoyance for feeling very "hopeless and helpless."

Following a comment that the agency sees " a bad manager or social worker is (one) who shows stress", one discussion group proposed that County Hall management and field staff need to undertake joint stress management courses. While the emphasis should be on developing "individual survival kits" it should be done in a manner that prevents the agency from placing all the responsibility for handling stress on to the worker.

County Hall and area managers agreed that for them "overload as a consequence of resource problems had been substantial for a few years now." For the County Hall managers "getting the resources from the politician for agreed priorities was bloody difficult because its almost an hung council." Area managers tended to see their overload difficulties around the matching of needs with available resources. Two area managers maintained that handling their staff reactions to budget constraints was an overload in staff management.

Almost all of those interviewed mentioned lack of resources as a major source of stress. Of all four categories of staff who were very critical of what was seen as a "politically motivated" resource crises, about 60 per cent indicated that politically as well as professionally they were opposed to the new social policy. This issue teased out some political satire - for example one worker, referring to the government, remarked that it had "a cash register as a heart and an accounts ledger for a brain." A manager was less inclined to blame "Thatcherism" adding caustically that responsibility for much of the crises lay with "a hardened electorate."

A number of practitioners, and to a slightly lesser extent, team leaders, revealed a mixture of pragmatism and emotion when discussing lack of resources - pragmatic in the ways and means of acquiring help for clients and emotional when looking at the growing consequences for clients of shrinking services. On several occasions it was suggested that unless additional resources were forthcoming "the increasing demand of child care work, certainly within the areas of abuse and neglect, would eventually draw resources away from the adult sector."

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Physical working conditions

Slightly over half of those interviewed said that "poor office conditions" and "overcrowded accommodations" were factors that heightened feelings of stress. As was expected, the greatest number of complaints came from practitioners and team leaders. Of the staff groups in the study, these two were the more concerned about the absence of client interviewing space. While discontent about accommodations was self-evident, it was not usually seen as overwhelming unless "you need some peace and quiet to catch up on paperwork," or as one person said "its been a rotten day and you want to be alone." There were complaints of "constant invasion of privacy ... you don't want to be crowded all the time". For several workers, having their own office would give them a feeling of some control over their work lives. Managers at County Hall and area social services officers admitted the benefits of having their own office.

There was a brief reference in the group discussions to the overcrowding of county area offices, the lack of interviewing rooms and poor client reception areas. These deficiencies have happened because of continuous reduction in government grants and edicts on how local government should organize its services. There was some doubt among a few group members that if the money was available the department would care enough to improve physical working conditions. While these circumstances were seen to create stress, the group considered there were more highly stressful experiences, particularly work overload and the atmosphere within the agency.

It was probably inevitable that little time was given to discussing accommodation solutions as most workers thought it unlikely that there would be any significant improvements because of financial restrictions.

Employment policies

The Northumberland workers were not enamoured of the employment policies and benefits available to them. Half considered them "reasonable", with only two people rating them "good". As many thought them "poor" as who thought them "average".

Promotion opportunities

Career development programs have never been a feature of the agency, and there is widespread concern over the lack of these. The training department in the past mainly undertook professional development for practitioners with few courses for various staff above grass root level.

Respondents did not rate their promotion prospects very highly. Half considered them "poor" and only 21 per cent thought them "good" (the rest "fair").

Career opportunities in Northumberland are few and will remain so for three main reasons: (1) financial constraints, (2) the agency is small and unlikely to grow in the foreseeable future, and (3) many staff are attracted to Northumberland because of its rural scenery and stay in the agency until they retire.

The agency was seen as being unable to do much about the restricted advancement opportunities. It was thought that within a few years a promotion bottleneck will occur which will probably be a common experience for social services departments.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Work relations

Over half of all interviewees identified poor relations within the Section as a considerable source of stress. The view of hospital staff toward senior management at County Hall was negative and relations with County Hall were cautious and mutually suspicious. "They never get involved with us (area and hospital) teams."

When the relations between the field teams and County Hall were mentioned, comments were many, particularly criticism of senior management and the Director of Social Services. County Hall senior management's dominating attitude toward subordinates combined with a highly motivated imperviousness to the heavily burdened area and hospital staff only furthered the sense of alienation between County Hall and the field. Managers do not appreciate the power struggle at County Hall, in which they can become unwittingly entangled.

County Hall's attitude appeared to be one of disinterest until "there are problems and then it meddles." Collaboration by the teams with County Hall management had a flavour of mollification which served to minimize visitation by senior management. On the surface, complaints by area staff, particularly area managers, that visits by County Hall were a rare event reflected much ambivalence about their presence in the area offices.

There was a disinclination to reveal much about the quality of relations between area and hospital teams except to admit that teams did have their eruptions of difficulties in relations, but generally those were put aside when County Hall appears on the scene.

Although a very small group in the Northumberland study, hospital workers were critical of their manager. There was concern about her competence to do her job. One hospital worker implied

that such criticism was also a reflection of resentment that the manager was appointed against the majority of workers' wishes. The manager herself was well aware of these negative feelings which were manifested in the poor cooperation of some. She expressed considerable frustration and anger, remarking on her staff's reluctance to give her much credence and appreciate how difficult it is representing them at County Hall. This problem she thought common to many social services agencies, reflecting a failure by the Section to give her position clarity of role and authority when taking over hospital social work in the early seventies.

Within the area teams there was evidence that managers, supervisors and practitioners had regular moments of uncertainty about the trust levels between them. I detected, albeit usually presented low key, an uneasiness regarding how each felt about the other. This was seen as unsettling by some and reflected by a practitioner when referring to his area manager "you never know where you stand with him." Area managers and supervisors admitted "the inevitable tensions" between them though felt they maintained a fairly mutual working rapport.

The area managers expressed apprehension about their staff's view of them in regard to resource decision making. They did, however, have confidence that their workers did good work and, when necessary, proved supportive. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of relations with their supervisors, there was a general feeling among practitioners that their supervisors would support them at a time of crisis but were less certain to what degree their area managers would. The majority of practitioners admitted that "the pressures and stresses are irksome" and are often the cause of intra-peer group tension and reinforcing office clicks. Despite times of dissension between themselves, practitioners when necessary most of the office teams can stand together. One area office appeared to have some intra-office relations difficulties which seemed to be associated with a very few workers. The dynamics were difficult to comprehend as information shared was sufficient to indicate problems

but selective enough to leave one tantalizingly curious as to be certain what it was all about.

More so in the area than the hospital teams, job descriptions are not well defined and the authority for carrying out one's role is not altogether clear. This sense of ambiguity over task boundaries and responsibilities is seen as highly anxiety-producing. Not defining the job responsibilities, keeps the person dependent on the person above them and this is a negative way of controlling staff.

To overcome the anxiety of role ambiguity, some individuals in area teams establish through trial and error a repertoire of discrete behavior for discovering what they can do and what they can't do. This may bring them into conflict with their supervisor or manager, but such instances become fewer as they discover the boundary limits of their roles. Area managers claim that they have succeeded in helping senior management to understand the complex and demanding role of the practitioner. But the question is has it got to the Social Services Committee? Managers and team leaders referred to the institutionalized stress caused by trying to accommodate the demands of subordinate and manager simultaneously.

A major source of role conflict between practitioner and manager occurs when they each follow a different set of values and orientations for achieving similar aims. County Hall managers and to a lesser extent area managers have suspended, if not abandoned, social work values through a combination of the government's economic policies and self-survival. "The mission of social work is missing." There were managers and team leaders and practitioners in both groups who agree that social work values have been weakened, but suggest that there are more positive ways than blunt confrontation for trying to resolve an endemic problem in social services departments.

The value of social intimacy in peer work groups is the opportunity of developing good peer relations which can make the difference between coping and floundering. Positive working relations are also a good antidote for stress and for the closing of ranks when necessary. A discerning comment was made that an unceasing sharing of stress burdens and other woes can become morbid and counterproductive by reinforcing gloom and helplessness in both the individual and the team.

Area and hospital managers have been unable to evolve as a cohesive support group because of their geographical distribution and there is only one of them in each of the area and hospital teams. Other than contact by telephone they usually only see one another at the monthly meeting of the field services managers group which also includes the Principal Assistant Director and his two Principal Field Work Officers.

Some concern was expressed about the paucity of positive relations within County Hall. The Principal Assistant Director and the Principal Field Work Officers are seen as isolated individuals and seem not to support one another. The relation between the Principal Assistant Director and the Director of Social Services is a very distant and perhaps not a very trusting one.

There was a belief that if senior management would take time to cultivate relations with the field teams based on credence and shared involvement there might be a recognition of good will. There were a few, however, who felt things had deteriorated to a point where reorganization might be the only option to rebuilding morale. It was thought doubtful that the situation would change, even when the current Director of Social Services retires.

Supervision and support

Lack of sufficient supervision is a stress familiar to many in the agency. Over a half of those interviewed claimed that lack of or insufficient supervision was a crucial factor in the creation of stress. Almost as many specifically referred to "support" as an essential part of the supervisory process. The large majority who complained about the low standard of supervision thought it derived from a combination of time and overload pressures on some team leaders and that managers "have no idea how to supervise or manage people."

There are a few supervisors who ensure that practitioners have regular supervision or some form of contact that allows monitoring and support to be given. Support through supervision was seen as vital to stress reduction - without it "overheated stress happens." County Hall would agree that planned supervision is essential while knowing that time and work pressures on supervisors and managers makes implementation very difficult. It appears that senior managers rarely experience the supervisory process.

The Principal Assistant Director commented that he never receives supervision from the Director of Social Services. Contact is usually limited to directives and information exchange. The two senior managers accountable to the Principal Assistant Director indicated they do not receive supervision but they do have access to him when necessary. Most discussions take place whenever the opportunities arise.

For area and hospital managers, supervision is a rarity. Managers maintained they felt isolated and never received supervision or support sessions from the Principal Assistant Director. The Field Work Services Division meeting which ought to provide the opportunity for group supervision meeting is not a very cohesive group and "and is no support group, that would be too threatening to them" (County Hall). Often, the nearest managers get to supervision is perhaps a telephone conversation with the

Principal Assistant Director or a brief interaction with him following the field services management group monthly meeting. One manager, drolly, remarked that it might be more stressful having supervision than not having it.

Generally, the team leaders interviewed have very few formal supervision sessions with their area managers. Two of the team leaders reported that throughout the section supervision has been seen as desirable rather than as a requirement. Members of the discussion groups said that there are team leaders who do have supervision from their managers but not necessarily on a regular basis. Others are said to have easy access to their managers when advice or support is required. Interestingly, in the group within which this comment was made, there were two managers but neither gave any response. Generally it appears to be the case that for most team leaders the proximity of their managers usually ensures "quick and easy access" when necessary.

All team leaders were committed to supervision with one expressing a concern which I believe was reflective of the views of his immediate peers. "It is naive to say the solution to the absence of a supervisory process is more time." He saw the need for the clear statement of priorities "giving a stable focus for supervision. We need to know where our efforts should be directed." He referred as others did to the necessity of clarifying the purpose of supervision because with the increasing skills and knowledge in social work "team leaders, let alone managers, are no longer able to embrace the increasing field of specialist knowledge and skills." This raised the necessity of rethinking the role of supervision as well as the requirement of accountability which would allow practitioners more discretion in professional decision making. Team leaders, like several practitioners wanted to see a reduction in "supervisory control (and emphasis) on "consultation." What was emerging here were issues about the changing role or demise of the team leader (Pain 1982) which is highly pertinent as the academic quality and competency of social worker practitioners continues to

rise. This and the long-standing desire for more control over their own work responsibilities including quality control adds to the work pressures on team leaders.

Interviews with several practitioners disclosed a touch of exasperation between their wishful expectations for supervision and what they actually got. In addition to resource acquisition, support from the supervisor was a key factor in the maintenance of the "emotional self." Pressure of time was seen to be the main reason for the deficiency of supervision "They have too much to do in addition to supervising us." "He means well but has no time for me." There were those few who were very censorious of their team leaders who they considered as "incompetent" or "indifferent." For the most, criticism was usually made within the context of sympathetic remarks indicating an appreciation of supervisors job difficulties. They are aware that their supervisors are under considerable stress and some are reluctant to push for supervision because they know that in an emergency they will receive help.

Overall none of the work groups were very detailed in their suggestions regarding what might be done and how about the Section's malfunctioning supervisory process. Change in the leadership at the director of social services level was thought to be a prerequisite for "any change in this place." The director was viewed as retaining "the power of action for himself." However, managers and team leaders considered "management training" as the main instrument for resolving supervision difficulties. Although managers acknowledge the significance of teamwork, it was team leaders and practitioners who were more mindful of seeing supervision as a means of strengthening team cohesiveness. Group supervision "would be a luxury."

Practitioners raised the question of being allowed to have more discretionary power over the management of their work. This, they thought, would allow practitioners a greater control over their cases by allowing them to be more involved in designing and

operating their own work patterns. One practitioner saw the value of such "freedom" as a mechanism for him having greater control over his stress reactions. He thought some stress situations were aggravated by management's reluctance to allocate time and facilities to develop their own work solutions to anxiety-producing experiences.

Resources and conflict

Notwithstanding the difficulties in securing resources, there were widespread views that County Hall, particularly the Director of Social Services, were managing the consequences badly..... "they always have ballsed it up." Knowing the seriousness of the situation, the division continues to take on new projects and expand existing ones with little or no consultation on the effects for under-resourced field teams, for example, guardian ad litum, mental health approved social workers and the unremitting child non-accidental injury work.

There was obvious disagreement between County Hall and the area offices on how the resource constraints should be handled. Area social services managers were appreciative of the difficulties the Principal Assistant Director faced in acquiring resources for the Division. Nevertheless, they did disagree with the formula for allocating resources, suggesting the whole allocation system needs to be looked at within the context of a review of the current decentralization policy. This was an issue of major importance to area managers because they maintained that the effective utilization of short resources required maximum decentralization. In other words, the area managers were saying that all existing significant centralized delivery services such as residential care should be decentralized to the areas. This they claimed would ensure the design of an efficient integrated local social services based on a local area needs.

Whatever the value of this reasoning, a number of hidden agendas were evident and it was reflective of well-established tensions experienced by those social services departments who operate a centralized or quasi-centralized approach to social services delivery. Most managers were sceptical of any move towards full decentralization or power redistribution while the Director remains in post. He was regarded as too fearful to redistribute power "Old George wants to hold on to control himself" and "George plays his own game...and keeps you guessing."

A number of area team leaders and practitioners shared their managers' views that the best solution to the "crisis" would be to find a way of involving staff in deciding future directions. There was a need for an involved director of social services and other senior managers to "start leading the way...not directing from behind desks." Several workers, including the County Hall managers, were critical of the director of social services for not being prepared to established sufficiently clear policies, objectives in relation to "where the whole department, not just fieldwork should be going." "We just meander with the appearance of a we plan to appease the (social services) committee." The Director was criticized for what was felt to be his refusal openly to tell the Social Services Committee what Field Work Services Division staff already know, that stress levels are worsening "for all of use, even for them" (County Hall managers).

In general, there was a sense of resignation with an underlying resentment that little would change to relieve work overload "even when he (director of social services) goes." The view was that any future changes would be structural to save money with little help for staff.

Organizational climate

From my experiences of the interviews and group discussions, the overall climate of the Section was seen by many as negative and a major source of stress, but there were ambivalent feelings. The climate was described as unsympathetic to social work values and alive with tension between senior managers at County Hall and middle managers in the area and hospital teams. Trust and morale were in a "sad state". Yet people rated the working atmosphere in the questionnaire, two thirds as "free" or "very free". Commitment in the teams according to one practitioner was "sufficient to slog on".

People did not feel, however, that the agency was doing a good job. Ratings in the questionnaire produced no high ratings (excellent or good). Half said "average", the rest less.

People were uncertain about the extent to which departmental support would be behind them if they made a mistake. Half responded "never" or "don't know " in the questionnaire. Again there was dissatisfaction over the recognition people received for good work. Only a third were satisfied or very satisfied.

The discussion groups were asked what were the "pros and cons" of working for their organization.

One main disadvantage is working in an agency that has a poor ethos. It is not a very rewarding or supportive environment in which to work because of its internal political machinations designed to preserve the power base at County Hall.

Practitioners did not like the tension caused by their pulling for the client and at the same time representing a bureaucracy whose own survival is more important. Some group members said they dealt with this by ignoring the macro issues that concern the client. Others coped by suppressing feelings of indignity at being treated as if they were not responsible people, while there

were those who carried their frustration around with them working the system as best they could.

A large majority of those in both discussion groups saw the advantage of working in the department as an opportunity to do work in which they believed. People said, too, that while the salary was not good, the financial benefits and pleasant environment in a rural county were some compensation for difficulties.

The phenomenon of 'upwards delegation' identified by Menzies in nursing (1960) was in evidence, in the frequent attribution of the source of distress to the shortcomings of area managers and County Hall. The Director of Social Services was blamed for much of the malaise. The Principal Assistant Director and his County Hall managers were seen as reinforcing the many problems by acquiescing uncritically to the demands of the Director.

The Division was considered to lack direction and there was an absence of clear policies except in the case of child care. What passes as policies are open to wide interpretation at the grass roots level. This was described as being very problematic, but more frustrating is that this situation promotes a necessary dependence on those above one in the hierarchy. Not unusually, a final interpretation is made by the principal director and sometimes the director of social services. While confidence in the Principal Assistant Director is deficient, the blame for his impotency and much of the pervasive malaise throughout all social services sections is seen to rest with the Director of Social Services. He is seen as a rigid individual with a strong need to control, who will not tolerate opposition and is reluctant to see staff. A practitioner in one of the groups, one appointed, raised the possibility of seeing the director to discuss a service delivery matter and was told by her manager that "no one, but no one, discusses anything with the director."

There is resistance to new ideas from senior management in spite of the "shop window of receptivity and dynamism paraded before new workers." New staff must quickly grasp that innovation is tolerated providing it does not "disturb the rigid system." To interrupt the status quo invites censorship and "you will be labeled a troublemaker".

Another irritant of stress for some is the awareness that the Director of Social Services presents to the Social Services Committee a picture of a department operating an integrated comprehensive service based on "smooth management." They are fed an illusion to which the Field Work Services Division is expected to give some appearance of reality. When this happens, the stress placed on the Principal Assistant Director "is fed right down to the field work" (practitioner level). County Hall is seen as the keeper of real power. Senior management is not prepared to share that power by involving county staff actively in critical decisions that affect them. Other than being allowed to manage their teams, area and hospital managers are not involved in the "big decisions... They're made elsewhere." Middle managers see the fieldwork services management group of which they are members as lacking vitality. It has no real decision-making power and lacks camaraderie.

Practitioners and team leaders as well have the feeling they are expected to do rather than to think. From the questionnaire it appears that half feel they "seldom" or "never" are consulted about changes affecting their jobs. They want to be part of the process that makes decisions which they have to implement and face the ensuing consequences.

Chapter 10
GEORGIA

Overall, Child and Adult Protective Services staff were very receptive to being interviewed. This was reflected in the welcome I received, their willingness to participate and inquisitiveness about my background and interests. Most were more revealing in their thoughts than I had expected - at least compared with their British counterparts. However, this did not mean I had unrestricted access to their thoughts because they were quite capable of holding on to information they did not want to share with me.

On occasions when some subjects realized they had perhaps divulged more than they had intended, they would say "I've said too much already" or something similar and move the focus of the interview to another issue. There were others who would share information only after being reassured several times of my confidentiality with added remarks such as "I wouldn't want anybody to hear me say this, they'd probably fire me." On just a few occasions some individuals realizing their critical thoughts had superseded their judgments would ask me not to write down their comments or to ensure their views would not be identifiable in the study's findings.

Generally, practitioners, supervisors and consultants were much more ardent in their criticism than managers, particularly those at State Office senior level. There were those middle managers at county level and first line managers in the State Office who, while selective in their revelations, were quite candid at times. The majority of senior managers were more moderate and subtle in their criticisms than those lower down the hierarchy, except when referring to practitioners and other county staff.

The meeting of staff in the fourth county was held in the staff conference room. I allowed time before the discussion for introductions, workers being free to share as much personal and work details as they wanted to. This did help to ease things a little but quite naturally there was apprehensiveness. This was not eased during the first twenty minutes by the several interruptions of those who arrived late because of the necessity of introducing themselves and my summarizing where the group was.

The first twenty minutes or so of the discussion was dominated by the deputy director and supervisors who identified without much dialogue issues of overload, consequences of resources shortage and the frustrations caused by federal and state welfare rules and regulations. Those two or three practitioners who did add comment appeared cautious, taking their cues from the remarks of the deputy director or supervisors. There was little doubt in my mind that the deputy director and to a lesser extent, the supervisors, were constraining practitioners' participation.

Whether or not the deputy director knew what was happening, I don't know. But he remarked that much of the discussion to that point had involved managerial staff. He said that he would like to hear the views of others in the group. After some silence, I reminded workers they were free to say whatever they felt comfortable with and I would treat whatever they said as highly confidential. After a further short silence the group rather warily opened up. As a result, cautious views were given and information exchanged. There was the occasional unguarded emotional response. On one of these occasions an individual with considerable feeling talked about the issues of trust and political influence. She received a veiled rebuke from one person and the rest of the group was left in anticipation. It was obvious to me that the individual was very uneasy about what she had revealed, so I intervened and diffused the situation.

I had anticipated, especially for practitioners, their scepticism about the novel opportunity to give openly their own views on their agency. It was perhaps almost too intimidating an experience. This assumption received some confirmation when after the meeting a supervisor and two workers in an almost apologetic tone indicated that to be too frank with ones views would not be prudent. On the whole though, the group was quite revealing, but more circumspect compared with individual interviews where workers were not constrained by an audience.

THE WORK ITSELF

Overload and its relation to resources

There was a general agreement that a prime source of stress is the unceasingly high unmanageable work loads very evident thoughout the Child and Adult Protective Services. Overload was seen by three-quarters of those interviewed as a prime source of work stress.

Whereas in Northumberland a half reported in the questionnaire that always or frequently they were worried about having too much to do in a day's work, here three-quarters did. Practitioners complained of "worrying all the time about getting it (work) done properly", and "overwork, overworry, overstressed and then grave" and "sometimes when I'm driving I'm dangerously distracted by worrying about some case or other I haven't time to see".

Far fewer people reported in the questionnaire that they felt the agency asked too much of them (38 per cent), in contrast to the picture emerging from the less guarded interviews. As in Northumberland the reported physical and temporal interference with personal life was lower that the sense of psychological intrusion. One in five reported dissatisfaction with time for personal life.

Stress from work overload is heightened when the rigid rules and regulations and serious underfunding result in urgently needed aid for clients not forthcoming. Without this aid, (e.g. money, health care, a shelter or day care) a client may relapse into another crisis and the value of support from the worker can dissipate. "So why start what you know you can't finish" because time allocation is very limited unless its "life and death" or outside pressure from a state legislator.

While most were inclined to dwell on the numerical perspective of overload, there was an awareness more apparent at direct service level that quantitative overload would impair the quality of work undertaken as well. Although all levels of workers admitted to being troubled by their heavy workloads, anxiety about "oversight" or making a mistake and placing both the client and self at risk was greatest among practitioners and their supervisors. Insufficient time to do assessments of foster homes sometimes resulted "bad placement judgements." In more than one instances this had resulted in a situation of suspected sexual abuse and this suspicion was "covered up." According to the interviewees, to have pursued the issue would have led to being "blackballed." One of them gave an example, adding "How do you think that makes me feel?" She, as others did, complained of management's intimidation by making life difficult for those who were too critical of the agency's shortcomings. According to Emily McFadden of Eastern Michigan University in an article in Social Work Today (1987), findings emerging from studies indicate that "up to ten percent of children in United States foster homes may be subjected to abuse by the foster parents."

Disquiet was expressed about the possibility of a case "blowing up" for which the practitioner and county office managers are blamed by state office Child and Adult Protective Services managers including the divisional director. This negative stance creates a mixture of frustration and guilt in those responsible for or connected with the case. "You think you could have done more." Caseloads are large and unmanageable which works to the detriment of the client as well as the worker.

There was a clear agreement that the State Office is well aware of the problems facing the county agencies but are more inclined to protect themselves and look after the politicians when things go wrong. There was an acceptance by some in the group that the ultimate fault lies with the Thrasher State legislators who continually underfund Department of Family and Children Services and

a feeling that those in charge of Department of Family and Children Services and Child and Adult Protective Services were not pulling for either the client or worker. Several female workers complained about the additional working hours they did which was necessary to keep up with the workload. In doing so they depleted themselves of the energy they felt belonged to their families.

A good quarter of practitioners told of their feeling of worry and guilt because they were unable to give their clients enough time and meet their material needs. One practitioner remarked that she felt "ineffective and useless" because she had little of herself to offer clients, "that's their last resource - me!" A practitioner of some long experience at the end of a mild emotional outburst about the stress of her workload said "Its just impossible, this place (county office) expects miracles. No allowance is given. She (the county director) says it's your responsibility to organize your workload. If a crisis happens, it's your fault."

The sense of having inadequate skills and knowledge for the job was rather less marked than in Northumberland. As many said they "rarely" felt this as felt it "always" (about a quarter each). They were about evenly divided between reporting that training on the job was "adequate" or "very little".

In the more cautious group discussion it was said that county directors are expected to implement underfunded new programs approved by the state legislature in addition to existing projects which are under-resourced. They were seen to be aware of the "tough job" practitioners have in translating service delivery programs into action.

Supervisors identify with the practitioners' plight because they feel equally over-burdened. They told how they experienced guilt by having to continually add to their practitioners' case overloads. They felt they had no option but to pass on mandatory

work, additional cases and other work precipitated by the actions of management. A supervisor recounted how she shared her feelings of being overburdened with her line manager only to be told to plan and prioritize her work load. "Stir things too much and you're seen as a trouble maker... and there will be no career here." She considered the county director as having been out of the field too long. "She doesn't understand what it's like in the front line out there today."

All but one of the middle managers at county and regional levels seemed somewhat resigned to work overload. They could see little that could be done, even if the State Office was willing. However, one director was most forthright in her judgment of the situation. She saw the State Office as the main culprit "creating this darn mess." She said the steady reduction in budget had been occurring for several years. There was never any serious attempt to consider the consequences of this. "We could have been better prepared than we were. It's a mess." She recognised that workloads for her staff were heavy, but said there was little she could do about it for the foreseeable future. "The state is not sympathetic to our work. We are always bottom of the financial barrel." She claimed that the Division of Family and Children Services director had never been to the county office. In her estimation, he had little interest in the counties as long as they were functioning "trouble free."

A majority of consultants knew their stress was generated by having so little time in which to complete their many tasks. Having given my oath not to reveal who said what, several consultants individually revealed what they saw as the consequences of work overload for them personally. They tended to compromise the quality of their own work by "cutting corners" and "just doing the bare essentials - which was a risky thing to do." Decision-making was slower due to the anxiety about making mistakes and the consequences if found out. "Errors stay in certain people's heads and are not forgotten." This was a reference to the possible impairment of

promotion opportunities if errors are made "especially if you are already marked by them (management)." Deadlines are increasingly difficult to meet and the completion of paperwork was postponed as long as possible.

During the interviews with consultants there were some graphic references to "blatant political interference in some decision making." Reference was made to a leading politician (Tom Murphy) in Georgia who "virtually had every state department under his control." To oppose or upset him could be the end of one's career in Georgia. When he or one of his colleagues makes a request, it is prudent not to be difficult and accept "you are powerless except to do."

While there was a general unanimity among the consultants about work overload generating stress, there was not the group identity I would have expected from this work group. They were located in different areas in the State Office but there was little cohesiveness between those who were closely grouped together.

The Division of Family and Children Services Director and those of his senior managers interviewed who had a major input into the Child and Adult Protective Services operations viewed their major overload problems as threefold.

First, there was appeasing the Department of Human Resources budget officer who has considerable power over deciding planning and targeting priorities and how budget monies should be allocated. To satisfy what is seen as "capricious demands of the budget office" generates considerable paperwork and involves extensive personpower who have to neglect their routine responsibilities.

Second was the frequency with which the federal government's ever-changing regulations "spewing red tape and sometimes punitive dictates." Because these regulations are often

received well after their implementation dates, the agency is actually out of compliance with federal expectations, putting federally sponsored programmes at risk. Correcting this situation which involves informing 159 Division of Family and Children Services county officers absorbs and overworks many significant managers and other State Office workers throughout all Division of Family and Children Services sections including Child and Adult Protective Services.

Third was the time spent by senior and middle managers attending to the conflict between themselves and their staff over how severe reductions should be implemented.

It is clear that as in Northumberland there was seen to be a clear connection between overload and lack of resources. The majority of those interviewed saw lack of prime resources like finance and staffing as the precipitators or major contributors to stressful experiences. A good half of practitioners were forthright in their condemnation of resource reductions. The generation of internal conflicts is also clear, and will be taken up in the section on organizational context.

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Physical conditions

Of the three county sites visited, the rural office had the superior accommodation while the other two, urban counties, had very poor office conditions. This was reflected by the absence of comments in the rural office and the multitude of complaints from urban county workers about the "depressing and overcrowded rooms we work in," and "uncomfortable," "tacky," and "unhygienic" office conditions. There was common assent that there was a serious shortage of private interviewing facilities for clients. Although "the ultimate responsibility for the bad working conditions" rested with the State Office it chose to ignore the situation.

The accommodation problem impacted primarily on practitioners and to a lesser extent supervisors because county management had their own individual rooms. Quite a number of practitioners believed that overcrowding was endemic to most Child and Adult Protective Services and other Division of Family and Children Services county services throughout Georgia.

Accommodation at the State Office "was only about coping" but was not a preoccupation with its staff who participated in the study. The large majority of the management had their own individual offices. Very few state staff made any interested reference to the overcrowding in the counties.

The Divisional Director and senior managers thought that budget constraints would prevent any improvement in or additional office space. It was suggested that county directors, as some have already done, should canvass their county authorities and local businessmen for money to purchase new or additional accommodations.

The county directors maintained that they were alert to "all the opportunities for raising money locally. Most is required to offset underfunding by the state" and therefore the main thrust must

come from the State Office. Both practitioners and supervisors were pessimistic that there would be any improvements in accommodations for either offices or client interviewing.

Paper work

There was almost group consensus that paperwork, which adds to the stress of overload, impinges on all levels of county staff activities. It detracts from time that should be given to program implementation and clients. The point was made that monitoring via paperwork is necessary but it has got out of control. One individual remarked that the jumble of forms are "a bureaucrat's dream and a worker's nightmare." Since the early 80s, regulations (especially federal) increased sizably. Although they find it irritating, group members realize that in some instances unless they complete their paper work in a timely manner, the State Office will be unable to complete statistics for the federal authorities which could put the federally-financed programmes in jeopardy. Also, it is not uncommon for there to be a long time lag between headquarters receiving new or modified federal regulations and their relaying them on to the counties. As a result, counties unknowingly become out of compliance. Why this should happen was open to speculation. One group member remarked in a somewhat wry manner that the managers concerned with such issues were suffering overload. Another individual implied perhaps they were too busy doing other things less demanding.

Flexi-time

The refusal of the agency to implement flexi-time aggravates stress overload for several female workers. The rigid work day, 8 AM - 5 PM, makes life difficult for those with families. Although the state office is against flexible working hours, the county directors have more discretion in this area than they are prepared to exercise.

Physical danger

The strength of stress feelings due to exposure to physical threat was more abundantly evident in the interviews than in the questionnaire, where about a quarter viewed the agency as not sufficiently concerned about their personal safety. As was to be expected, the largest population of staff who expressed anxiety about personal safety was to be found among the practitioners. Both black and white direct service staff recalled how close they had been to being physically assaulted by clients when home visiting. "You just prayed it wouldn't happen. It would be difficult to defend yourself alone." A practitioner told of a knife being pulled on her. "It was very scary; I didn't know what to do." Another worker described how she was pushed around in a scuffle. Increasingly, the greatest dread for most direct services workers is being involved in drug cases. A comment by another practitioner is confirmed daily by the news media in the capital of Georgia. "Things are real bad in the poor and drug-ridden areas where violence is rampant...and guns go off like pop-corn."

There seemed little doubt that most managers were genuinely perplexed about the handling of the increasing potential for violence against practitioners. Whatever the depth of managers' concerns, they did not display the "feeling association" that supervisors expressed in their anxiety about their practitioners.

Litigation

This matter, as I expected, proved to be much more of an extensive problem for Child and Adult Protective Services workers in Georgia than Social Services staff in Northumberland. Almost half of all workers interviewed worried about litigation and it was seen, particularly by supervisors and managers, as an additional reason why all dealings with clients should be meticulously documented. The expectation by management was that workers ensure continuous updating of all client documentation. Most practitioners, on the

whole, were appreciative of this requirement. Nevertheless, several insisted that the agency's preoccupation with protecting itself not only reduced client contact time but was used by management as a facade for "reining us in" thereby keeping tight control of their work behavior.

Also of significance was the finding that 60 per cent of all interviewed were uncertain if support would be forthcoming from management should they make a significant error of judgment in good faith.

Employment policies

In general, the employment policies and benefits available in the agency were well regarded. Sixty per sent in the questionnaire reported "good" to the relevant question, and only a few reported "poor". Even allowing for a 'caution factor', this contributes to the picture of the relative importance of extrinsic feature of athe work to member of this agency.

Promotion opportunities.

Planned career development has never been a feature of any of the Department of Family and Children Services divisions. Any career assistance has been dependent entirely on the good will of the supervisor or manager. Lack of career opportunity has been a frustration for those who are career minded. In the group, promotion was seen to as seriously curtailed, and not to be all the fault of management. The questionnaires, perhaps not surprisingly, give a more positive picture with more reporting that their promotion opportunities were "good" or "excellent" than reported "poor" or less.

Advancement into management was seen by a few practitioners as trying to escape the "heavy stress" of fieldwork. With a quiet cynicism, it was suggested that upward mobility often depends on

"how many waves you created and with whom." A reference was made to some past promotions at state office level which were surprising because of the applicants' inexperience. The implication of the statement was that these people were probably suitably connected. There were a number of experienced practitioners who did not necessarily want an upward career. For them stress is not having opportunities for further stimulation, refreshing their existing expertise and acquiring new knowledge and skills. "We know we do a good job even if they (state office management) don't notice."

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Work relations

Three-quarters of those interviewed indicated that work relations were a source of stress for them. Interestingly, in the questionnaire a majority of all Child and Adult Protective Services staff indicated that they did not want any change in their work relations while the interviews revealed there was dissatisfaction with relations within their various offices and sites.

Relations between practitioners and supervisers are dealt with in the next section on supervision. Overall, county directors and their first line managers were less uncertain about the quality of their relations with supervisors than about those with practitioners. They saw practitioners' lack of understanding of their managerial responsibility as impeding smooth relations between "them and us." One director admitted that the emphasis on "community action as a social work technique compared with my training (in casework) is difficult to swallow. Some of them are confrontational about everything."

Poor relations with the State Office management was a matter of significant concern to many county staff. County staff were more outspoken in their criticism of State Office managers than State Office managers were of county staff. Both saw the other as responsible for the negative relations that existed between them. There was cynicism, and to a large extent relations between counties and the State Office were disingenuous, "both sides playing a charade of cooperation and courteousness to avoid open confrontation." This uneasy alliance, it was thought, helped keep State Officers away from the counties "unless you really screwed up and then they wouldn't miss that chance."

The three urban and regional county directors, and to a lesser extent their first line managers based their comments on State Office managers as result of direct contact with them; whereas

most practitioners and supervisors were inclined to judge the State Office by the agency's rules and regulations, personnel policies and what they heard about State Office management from their own managers and colleagues.

The county directors were quite revealing in their comments about the State Office managers though less volatile than most direct service staff. In their own different ways the three managers suggested that the State Office "were often not upfront." There was a tendency for "those (State Office) to follow their own agendas which were often never made fully clear to county staff. Usually though they were aimed at keeping you in a state of uncertainty and open to them calling the shots." In a somewhat derisory humour one director remarked that "you can be sure that this is one way that he (Division of Family and Children Services divisional director) is trying to keep his finger on the trigger. I'm no darn fool. I know what he is up to."

It was evident from the county directors that they did not have much confidence in the competence of the divisional director and several of his management team whom they saw as more committed to an appeasing relationship with state legislators and the Department of Human Resources Commissioner "than to their front line workers in the counties."

A not uncommon experience of county managers relates to the preparation by state office managers of a new policy or regulation for implementation at county level. Having agreed to the circulation to the counties they fail to check with each other and the regional director their expectations of the county director who must implement the policy or regulation. Then, following consultation with his regional director, the county director implements what he understand as his regional director's instruction. Eventually, the implementation strategy collides with the expectations of the state office, resulting in a bewildered and frustrated county director being ruled out of compliance.

Comments from practitioners and supervisors about relations between their counties and the State Office ranged from the moderate to the caustic. Many indicated said that it was inevitable that relations between the two "would be sour because they have little interest in what we are, only what they can get out of us". "We are his (divisional director) ticket to glory or being fired and that's the extent of his interest in us. Now would you want to be loyal to that."

An experienced practitioner took the opportunity when talking about "the chasm" between the State Office and the counties to suggest that for his (urban director) survival he is dependent on the "good relations with the state's good 'ole boy network." She recounted how "certain people in Division of Family and Children Services got their positions by knowing those politicians who held the power in Georgia. They got their jobs through influence and the divisional director can't touch em." She said that she had no time for the divisional director "or any of the political malignant corruptors in Georgia." When you talk of relations between counties and down there (State Office) it's like a cobweb, complex and far-ranging. Sometimes what seems a simple relationship matter can be far more intriguing. Often it depends on the issue, the people involved, and if a legislator is involved, the Director dare not upset him even if he upset all of the Division of Family and Children Services. His job would be on the line if he ignored him."

The overall view was that practitioners and supervisors avoid contact with State Office staff because not only are they not to be trusted but "if you upset them they could be punitive." There were references to "phoney compliments about the importance of the individual worker, the giving out of faithful service certificates and someone being the wonder of the month. It's all apple sauce" (eyewash).

The remarks of senior managers at the State Office about their relations with county staff were generally a mixture of acknowledging the difficulties the counties faced and thinly disguised criticism of the way the were handling these.

The divisional director was one of those restrained in his evaluation of his relations with county personnel, notably county directors. He said that it was impossible to have a conflict-free relationship with county managers as it was with his senior manager because of the difficulties that all sections of Division of Family and Children Services were having and "the nature of people in organizations." He repeated a remark he made several times during the interview that there were those at all levels in Child and Adult Protective Services that would "not take cognizance of the change of political and public will towards social services." Consequently, I found difficulty in plumbing the depths of his comment that although he wanted to foster improved relations throughout the division and looked to "a more humanized approach to staff care" he would not hesitate to make personnel changes if it was necessary for the division's good." He confirmed that very recently he had made a number of significant senior managerial changes (not Child and Adult Protective Services) at the State Office. The upshot was that one person had resigned and others had been moved to different locations within the State Office. I was given to understand that there had been no prior consultations with the individuals affected until they were actually removed from their posts. He acknowledged that it had had "an unsettling affect," but he felt that "things were back to normal now."

All but two of the other State Office managers were rather diplomatic in their evaluations of relations with county staff which, as expected, was mainly confined to the county directors. However, while acknowledging the difficulties facing the counties, there were a number of thinly disguised criticisms. Many counties were having problems matching their reduced resources with demand for which they blamed the State Office. This attitude "does nothing

to increase understanding of their plight, and "keeps the friction going between us."

Of the two managers who were very open in giving their perceptions of relations between State Office and county staff, one was sympathetic towards the counties "They are weighed down with work (and) we expect them to carry a burden without the capability to deal with it adequately." He was referring to lack of "cash and caring support," and was not surprised "feelings about those at headquarters were not good," while the other manager was highly evocative in his remarks referring to a cross section of county managerial personnel by position and not by name as "fucking useless." He then gradually toned down this statement by saying that there were good staff but "over the years the quality of recruitment had dropped."

The senior managers by intimation seemed each to have their own unpublished list of favoured managers who they thought had the attributes that made them "good managers." What ever these were was never very well specified. They ranged from "he's good", "she's been in social work a long time and knows what it's about", "they are real social work professionals and know how to administer", "he is probably the smartest (county) director we've got" to "there'll be no nonsense with her", "they're fair but you had better attend to your job!", "they run a tight ship", "she knows what's happening on her block" and "she keeps her eyes and ears open and they have to do it the right way...she makes sure of that." The names on the senior managers mentally retained lists were very similar, suggesting more than a hint of accord among senior management. Interestingly, I had no indication from the county directors interviewed that they suspected such a list existed although one of them was mentioned by all the senior managers.

From my observations of senior office managers interviewed, for the most there was a considerable lack of esprit de corp. There plainly was a credibility gap between their corporate claim that

relations with one another were positively collegial, because in the individual interviews unease and distrust between them was much in evidence. For example, "the atmosphere in this place! You need to be watchful what you say to who." It was suggested that "an uneasy peace exists in this place." Referring to the divisional director and recent enforced staff changes one manager remarked "you never know what's going to happen next," adding that "I could be next."

Relations with other agencies were seen by half as being stressful. There were two agencies who were frequently mentioned with whom most staff levels experienced difficulties, one an external agency (the legal system) and a internal Department of Human Resources agency (mental health). Difficulties with the legal system were principally concerned with judges' decisions regarding children at risk. Child and Adult Protective Services workers often found themselves placed "in a predicament." The workers acting upon an agency decision to either remove or not remove a child from home often find themselves at "odds with the judge and the lawyer." The common view held, especially by practitioners, was that they were "not viewed as professionally capable when compared with the presentations of psychologists, lawyers and even policemen." Complaints were made that whatever the court's verdict, the agency remained vulnerable to public criticism for taking the case to court or open to being sued for allegedly violating someone's right. "We rarely seem to do the right thing."

Relations with mental health workers were a major frustration to Child and Adult Protective Services practitioners. In essence, mental health workers were viewed as haughty in their dealings with "those at the direct service level and supervisors." This attitude was reinforced by the higher regard which is accorded mental health workers by "not only the medical and judicial systems but by the Department of Human Resources itself." Several practitioners maintained their assertions were evidenced in the "superior decor and furnishings of mental health centres and down town at the State Office." I visited the state headquarters of

mental health and three mental health centres. There was no doubt that the physical space and embellishments including office and interviewing space was much more congenial than any I had seen in my limited experience of the State Office and county Child and Adult Protective Services offices.

Supervision and support

Regular and planned supervision including consultation for all levels of staff was said to be central to stress reduction. Supervision is a medium for getting emotional and well as material support. In the group discussion, the deputy director suggested that supervision could be a way in which the supervisee can contribute to the running of the agency, but this point was not developed. It was put forth that a good supervision model would also give the supervisor a sense of accomplishment. However, the group was in accord that achieving the purpose of supervision is very difficult because supervisor and supervisee are often distracted from the process by their respective demanding work responsibilities.

Throughout all categories of staff there was a concern about the lack of supervision. Unease was greater among practitioners and consultants. Managers and supervisors usually talked about "not having administrative supervision" while consultants and practitioners tended to use the terms "professional supervision" or just "supervision."

Practitioners, some supervisors, and consultants were critical about the application of quality control to their work - quality control being a mechanism for measuring the cost benefit of services to the client. "They translate people into commodities their allegiance to implementing quality control. According to several managers, the pressure for quality control "comes from the commissioner's office." However, the point was made that, with limited financial resources, what was the alternative?

Over the whole range of staff interviewed there was a very large number who said they rarely if ever received "proper" supervision. They repeatedly talked about the need for "support" or used other metaphors such as "understand what's going on;" "I need to offload sometimes;" "we need to know if we're going in the right direction;" "am I in line with the performance and strategies of management;" "I've a need to blow my top sometimes;" and "I need reassurance that what I am doing with my resources is in line with the divisional director's expectations."

A large proportion of practitioners proved to be vociferous in their views on supervision. For many, any serious attempt at supervision was overridden by the heavy work loads of both supervisor and practitioner "which permits supervisors just enough time to check the basics." On the other hand there "are supervisors who wouldn't know how to supervise if they had to."

There was a mixture of reactions by practitioners towards their supervisors. A small number of them were irritated by their supervisors' "tight rein" placed on them. There was a general feeling that these supervisors were either scared of the county director or were wanting promotion.

A few of the practitioners interviewed cited uninhibited examples of what they perceived as unsupportive and intimidating behaviour by their supervisor. "Mine wants a smooth ride and when I make too many ripples she gives me a tough time. She's an OK person with the (county) director." A black female admitted to open conflicts with her white supervisor "because I stand my ground over the needs of my families when she disagrees. I tell her how can she know what they need to survive when she seldom discusses them with me." This worker believed her supervisor's negative behaviour was highly motivated and supported by management in as much as she was not prepared "to rein back my opinions about the way this place (county office) works." Two other workers asserted that their experience of feeling "alone and unsupported" by their supervisors

was more prevalent than generally acknowledged. They claimed that "we and others are told what to do. There is no invitation to share in the work allocation."

One practitioner remarked that, "None of my group trusts our supervisor. She's not trustworthy. Tells the director everything. We report what we want her to know." There was one practitioners who observed that her supervisor was "a thoughtful and caring type who is all wound up most of the time... She worries all the time her stress as well as our own... But she knows her job well."

There were those practitioners who, while disliking their supervisor's constant "peering over my shoulder watching everything I do as if I'm not very capable," believe that they (supervisors) are expected to be more "dominating than supervising." This expectation they asserted is based on example and not written rules. One supervisor thought that the "willingness to apply an intimidating manner to regulating staff was a long standing part of Georgia bureaucracy." She suggested that for many following promotion this became an integral part of their "work persona" which they never question; "well some don't, even though it leads to bad relations between the workers and supervisors and managers".

Supervisors being aware of the general dispiritedness among "most of us" endeavour to support their workers. "It's difficult for us. We don't have the numbers to support one another like our workers do." They see the lack of concern for staff with the ensuing cause of low morale and distrust throughout the division as emanating from the State Office. Half of the supervisors, while careful not to be too pointed in their criticism of their managers, particularly their county directors, thought that they should be more active in reminding the State Office of the debilitating effect of the "relentless pressure from the State Office to get more work out of practitioners."

For most supervisors there was a reasonable working rapport with their supervisees, but they knew that it was not as open as they would like. "It can't be when we have to monitor them so closely because we are monitored closely by management and are required to confirm compliance by practitioners." This responsibility generates an uneasy trust between some practitioners and supervisors.

Supervisors acknowledged that at times their relations with practitioners were stressful. As one supervisor remarked "especially when I cannot allow them to ignore policy in the interest of their clients I think some of 'em resent not having their own way." There were other supervisors who claimed they understood how practitioners felt, as they had at one time been in direct services themselves. Two admitted that as practitioners they had frequently manipulated rules to advantage their clients resulting in tension with their supervisors.

A significant origin of stress experienced by practitioners and supervisors can be seen as a conflict between managerial and social work values. Management's responsibility was seen to be tied to the political process to carry out the political will, including dealing with restricted resources and the consequent pressure on work loads. Most practitioners and supervisors see themselves as being accountable to the client as well as management. Supervisors and especially practitioners can find themselves caught in the middle between management's expectations and the needs of clients. "At times this makes the going rough for everyone, especially when strong feelings arise."

Virtually all the consultants in the child care advisory sections expressed candidly their dissatisfaction with the lack of supervisory support. Such views were well encapsulated in the comments of a peer - "what passes for supervision or shades of whatever is not bothered with policy and service effectiveness but more with protecting those above us." Several of these consultants

felt frustration that their supervisors were not as qualified and experienced as they were. They claimed that they knew they would not have been appointed to the posts had they applied, adding that "it much depends on who you know inside and outside the department." The reference to "outside the department" was a familiar theme to be heard throughout the study referring as it did to "political influence."

Although the adult advisory section consultants were less critical of its supervisors, they admitted inadequacies in their supervisory process. "Supervisors are also overloaded but we make sure we touch base with each other." This was a useful method of alerting the need for support. However, at the root of the weak supervisory support system according to one consultant "is poor leadership from the top with a lack of caring about staff."

Managers at the State Office and urban and regional directors would like regular management supervision. It appears that it has never been an integral part of management's operating process. The divisional director who does not give planned or spontaneous supervision to his senior managers and urban and regional directors does not receive supervision from the Department of Human Resources commissioner.

Although the divisional director made no judgmental comment on not receiving supervision a mixture of his senior and middle managers did. Although there was a miscellany of pronouncements on the absence or deficiencies in supervision in substance they were critical, offering no constructive solutions other than "it ought to be mandatory" or "Doug (divisional director) should enforce it."

When the discussion group was specifically asked what could be done, it was suggested that for the experienced staff members, an emphasis on consultation would be more appropriate. This would allow time for the novice worker and give the more experienced worker more responsibility for his or her workload. The idea of

support groups where members can share satisfaction, frustrations and uncertainties in an informal manner were seen as a possibility. Work problem solving groups, similar to quality circles, were seen to be a way of involving staff in the agency as well as building trust. Individual interviews cast doubts on the feasibility of such ideas.

The idea that "good supervision" is central to the workings of Child and Adult Protective Services, and the Division of Family and Children Services, was received with both cynicism and humour.

Supervision, it was suggested would possibly "destabilize the existing order of things." According to one senior manager, the developmental element in the supervisory process could lead to "a collective confidence that would threaten top management. That is not the way things are done in this state." Most, excluding the divisional director, senior and middle managers thought that, in view of the siege mentality present throughout Child and Adult Protective Services, the priority will be "task rather than staff centered." This belief was further echoed in brief comments on an agency "that was seen to be part of a vast over-bureaucratized state organization. The rules and regulations are there to superintend, not manage." One manager, a native of Georgia, suggested that "in this state, bureaucracy can survive but not succeed."

Resources and conflict

Some practitioners used a variety of phrases like "they're in it only for the job" to assert that State Office management by its inaction were colluding with the anti-welfare state legislature to underfund Child and Adult Protective Services. There were references by a few practitioners to those of their peers who agreed with the financial constraints revealing little sympathy for their clients. The suggestion was that these colleagues reflected main stream public negativeness towards welfare which was welcomed by both politicians and management.

Practitioners felt that being the front-line of the agency, they had to deal with the "gut reactions" of clients who suffered directly due to budget cuts. One long-experienced practitioner claimed that some of the violence directed toward practitioners was a reflection of the deep despair felt by clients who because of "federal cash cuts and a punitive morality" were denied access to "basic survival resources." The reference to "punitive morality" arose on a number of occasions throughout the Child and Adult Protective Services interviews. In this context the respondent suggested that "the religious zealots and hard nosed" in the Georgia legislature deliberately and callously underfunded state social services concerned with poverty which was seen as either "lack of godliness" or "plain laziness."

Practitioners, for the most, did not see their county management being directly at fault for resource shortages. They, however, did feel that managers should have been more energetic in communicating anticipated consequences "which are now with us." There was a fairly widespread belief that county managers, especially those below county director, were not going to "make waves" and impair promotion prospects or "threaten job security."

Supervisors viewed "contemporary trends" as the reason for the "lack of means to do our job and the "the worsening poverty of families." Most supervisors disclosed more caution than practitioners when reviewing management's handling of the allocation of reduced resources. Comments on their county management's administration of "cuts" at local level, unlike many practitioners, incorporated very muted criticism. They were less diffident when referring to the low profile of the State Office in expressing concern to the legislature about resource shortfall and the "breaking point" for counties and workers. However there were supervisors who were careful to qualify negative feelings concerning senior managers with a critique of the difficulties that these managers faced at their level e.g. "He (the Director) must carry out what they (the legislators) say."

Consultants' responsibilities involved supporting and encouraging the counties to develop better service delivery mechanisms and innovative new projects. The remark of one consultant is representative of the view of her colleagues. "Its farcical, my job is to support the counties in service improvements and developments. With what? The county directors laugh at you when you suggest improvements. What with, they ask? You tell them (State Office management) the resource problems. I'm seen (by management) as a defeatist and that's a further negative mark against me. This place just winds me up."

All but two of the senior managers at the State Office while admitting the serious decline in resources placed a heavy burden on the county staff, saw the counties as defeatist, not responding positively. It was suggested that instead of looking at the "can't, they should be more active in seeking other options to compensate for cuts or reduced service delivery. Its a challenge."

Two managers were not critical of the county staff. One, rather neutrally referred to the resource cuts as pertinent to the times, adding "the tide will turn again, just wait." The other manager critical of budget cuts made it clear that he was identifying with the "plight" as he saw it of the county staff. While he knew there was little the divisional director could do about contesting the cuts "he could be more supportive of direct service staff now with little more than their own energy as a resource." He claimed the there were a few top managers engaged in a "survival exercise." The Department of Human Resources Commissioner was getting "the heat" from the Governor's office because of the high benefit error rate. He in turn was putting "pressure" on the Division of Family and Children Services Divisional Director to achieve a significant reduction in the error rate. Consequently, much of the agency's resources were now concentrated on lowering the benefit error rate which was impoverishing Child and Adult Protective Services. The reference to "survival exercise" was implying that if the divisional director was

not successful in reducing the error rate, he and perhaps some others could lose their jobs. It appears that over the past five years two directors have been asked to resign for not maintaining a satisfactory level of agency performance, particularly in the Benefits Payments Section.

There was some degree of consensus that there were too many power positions in the Child and Adult Protective Services as well as in Department of Family and Children Services where infighting took place. There were managers who were always manoeuvering to increase their power. At times, county staff at all levels could find themselves unwittingly caught up in the politics of a power struggle scenario.

The Programme Support Section of Department of Family and Children Services, which is responsible for preparing budgets for counties, come under criticism for being an opportunistic empire builder. From the late 70s onward the section was viewed as having taken advantage of the emphasis on financial management in the public sector to procure considerable power. It now intervenes in professional matters such as the way a program is undertaken to accommodate local need.

It was suggested that one of its aims is to apply cost benefit analysis to programs. Whatever the criteria for this might be was not known by anyone in the group. Cost benefit analysis was seen as another term for quality control. They saw qauality control as little more than an excuse for maintaining low funding. They said they were told to maximise quality without the funding which they felt might enable them to provide it. They experience quality control as an arbitrary device, depending on which inspector came around.

Proposals to computerize all Department of Family and Children Services activities including those in the counties is seen as headquarters management wanting quick access to the day-to-day

operations of the counties. Some practitioners speculated that computers could be used by headquarters managers to monitor workers' application of policies and regulations enabling corrective action to be applied speedily if necessary. This, it was thought, might well lead to circumscribing what little authority the Child and Adult Protective Services workers now have.

Organizational climate

When asked what they thought of the climate within which they worked, respondents perceived a general malaise thoughout Child and Adult Protective Services and Department of Family and Children Services itself. They attributed this to the uncaring, inflexible and implacable agency of which they were a part. There was a shortage of good leadership and planned direction from the top.

From my observations of the individual interviews, I see the climate of the Child and Adult Protective Services as reflective of the whole Department of Family and Children Services, which for almost a decade had undergone excessive changes to image and function and what one senior manager described as "massive political and public enmity." This serious plight which began a little after the trauma of the reorganization of medical and social services in Georgia has left a heavy shadow of despair and disillusionment among Child and Adult Protective Services as well as the larger Division of Family and Children Services staff. Neither Child and Adult Protective Services or other Division of Family and Children Services staff had the behaviour repertoire and material resources to deal with the overwhelming novel encounters which exacerbated already inherent deficiencies.

As a result, morale is low and trust between the different organizational levels of staff is fragile, with an uneasy truce between some workers, especially in senior management. A thin veil of congeniality covers the workforce, particularly among direct services staff and consultants who see themselves as undervalued and

controlled rather than supervised. Within this climate of discontent there is considerable latent hostility that manifests itself in a variety of subtle and not so subtle ways

Looking at the questionnaire responses we see a more positive picture than emerges from the group discussion and particularly from the interviews. Predominantly, they rated the working atmosphere as "distant but not unfriendly". Half rated the agency performance as "excellent" or "good" (none in Northumberland), while they all reported that they were at least "occasionally" consulted about changes which affect them. Yet almost 40 per cent of those workers who completed the questionnaire said they would leave if they could find a viable alternative employment. For most there is a feeling of "entrapment" because of their personal circumstances or the complex state salary and benefits system would make it economically unsound to leave the agency.

When I asked in the group what they could do about work stresses, there was a quick response - "get out-quit the job." Notwithstanding the quipping element in the reply, there was some wishful thinking as well. Quitting their job for most in the group was not an option. The Deputy County Director in a somewhat uneasy manner indicated some agreement with those supervisors and practitioners who said they were powerless to do much about their work stresses.

The discussion group was asked what were the "pros and cons" of working for their organization.

For the most part the advantages for working for Child and Adult Protective Services were confined to job security. In many counties in Georgia there is a scarcity of jobs, certainly of those offering job security. Because the social work qualification is not a requirement in Child and Adult Protective Services, a significant number of unqualified individuals throughout the state joined the

agency for reasons of job security. There is also a large number who, with qualifications and without, chose to work in Child and Adult Protective Services. For many of these workers any idealism they had on appointment has been overwhelmed by the agency's rigid conservatism and uncaring attitude and infectious demoralization. For both groups there is a strong feeling of entrapment, because to leave the agency would not only deny a salary but loss of good state benefits, e.g. pension, and very important, loss of family health insurance. One discussant remarked "you stay at work to survive." Another commented, "the benefits with the salary are enough to hook you but not enough to stay ahead."

Discussion of the disadvantages of working at Child and Adult Protective Services was more-or-less similar in content and flavour to that of question one when discussing the various organizational stress factors.

A particular external factor affects the working climate and produces a lot of anxiety. In Georgia, attempts to "use the political ole' boy network for favours from state institutions is well known" and has a long history. Instances were given of influential state and county individuals overriding the legitimate decisions of lower level staff. These were related with a variety of emotional feelings that ranged from anger to anxiety that "if it was known that I talked about it publicly I could be fired."

One child protective worker gave a brief account which was confirmed later by a colleague in the same office, of how a state politician contacted a "manager" making it obvious that he wanted an adoption to favour "his friends". Both workers learned eventually that "someone at the top gave the approval". With evident disgust she decried what she saw as the "compromising of professionalism" but knew she could do little about it. Her frustration was due to "my powerlessness." The other worker was "resigned to bollweeviling, as a way of life in the southern states".

Another example concerned a dominant state politician who "did not like the way a pilot project was being applied in his congressional district. He got his way. "Every one knew he could make trouble for the division as well as the county director." These vignettes were but just a few of several given by Child and Adult Protective Services workers to demonstrate what was referred to as "political intimidation" which generated "stress and strain" within practitioner, supervisor and manager, sometimes creating an uneasy alliance or discord among the three.

A small number of practitioners objected to the anti-union stance by the agency which reflected the well institutionalized anti-labour union culture of southern American states. They thought that unionization of staff would help reduce intimidation of staff who are "pushed around" with no recourse other than to "bite the bullet or terminate." To publicly acknowledge "you belong to a union would probably be the end of a career in Georgia. It would follow you everywhere." A handful of practitioners who were members of the Georgia State Employees Association saw it as a form of litigation insurance should the agency treat them wrongfully. Certainly the negative attitude towards union activity within the agency was confirmed by a whole range of those interviewed. This meant that as members of a union they had to keep this secret or loose promotional opportunities.

An a union office manager revealed that the union only had a small percentage of state employees as members. The state was intensely anti-labour and could find avenues for "hurting or blackballing" a union member if it wanted to "but that would be where the union would take action." He agreed that many union members were reluctant to disclose their membership, pointing out that with the declassification of social work positions in Division of Family and Children Services there was no shortage of applicants for the Child and Adult Protective Services.

Lack of recognition by the state office is a source of complaint. For example, praise of county offices is rarely heard. The State Office becomes quickly involved when a mistake is made which they usually highlight, "but you never get compliments for your successes." County staff are rarely involved in decision-making even when they have the knowledge and experience that could be useful in deciding service delivery issues on existing and new programs. One worker in the discussion groups remarked "Sometimes we think we must be seen as gismos (machines) by certain managers." Although the individual did not explicitly say so, I felt sure that this was a reference to the Department of Family and Children Services Divisional Director and the Child and Adult Protective Services Section Director at the state office. The agency is said to have a mission statement and broad objectives but none in the group had seen any such documents. "How can you identify with what you don't know." Some workers claimed to have the occasional resurgence of enthusiasm, but they found it was difficult to maintain that hopefulness.

Overall, the view was that there was little that could be done about the poor internal relations in the agency, particularly between State Office and county offices, until there is a shift in political will accompanied by a change in leadership at the top of Department of Human Resources as well as Division of Family and Children Services.

There was a cautious shared view that many of the difficulties of the Child and Adult Protective Services difficulties lie with the state legislators' ambivalence toward welfare which is preventing the development of a strong political leadership to take on the cause of Child and Adult Protective Services.

There were those usually at the lower levels who suggested that at the higher echelons of the Division of Family and Children Services and the Department of Human Resources change would be resisted because it would threaten institutional behaviour that is rooted in "the historical control of people in a fashion peculiar to (Georgia) state." Expressively stated by one interviewee "a master-slave mentality is uncritically accepted by the majority of Georgians...with stress on the peon."

Chapter 11
COMPARISONS

The gist of both the similarities and differences between the Northumberland and the Georgia agencies can be seen in the replies to the critical incident inventories. Although very few were returned, they reflect what has been described in the previous two chapters.

In Northumberland, six practitioners related stress to incidents of overwork, to disagreement with their team leaders or management, and to the constraints arising from scarce resources or procedural and policy constraints.

One of the two team leaders complained of stress feelings (anxiety) during and after a child abuse conference. The other reported tension between himself and one of his practitioners over the shortage of a badly needed resource for a client. He supported the worker but was not supported by his own management.

The two Northumberland managers complained of lack of clarity over role responsibilities in relation to senior management's expectation in making decisions about resource delivery which was a source of discontent among practitioners. One also commented about a difficulty in dealing with practitioners causing a "turmoil" for which he was held accountable.

In Georgia, practitioners related stress to feeling under pressure, concern over making a mistaken judgment, lack of support from health service professionals from other sections of the Department, of apprehension during interviewing a potentially violent client and of disagreement with a line manager over the payment of a client's benefits.

One consultant reported a difficult experience with her line manager. Another referred to county ignoring her advice and being racially biased. A third decribed a foster care incident in which she was criticized and got no support from her line manager.

Managers referred to anxiety over handling personal matters and of a row brewing with the state office over staffing levels.

Both show how stress and consequent personal distress arises from the difficulty of delivering a service in the face of lack of resources, pressure of overwork, from disputes and disagreements waith others, and from a discrepancy between what is felt to be necessary and what is possible.

If anything, the Georgia incidents show a little more anxiety arising from the work itself.

THE WORK ITSELF

Overload

An immediate consequence of lack of resources is the ever-increasing work load. The resulting overload on workers itself produces significant stress in workers.

The extent of consensus is reflected in the questionnaire responses shown in Table 4. Here we see how over half of the Northumberland group report that they worry about having too much to do in a working day "always" or "frequently", while over three quarters of the Georgia group do so.

TABLE 4. Worry about overload

How often	Northumberland		Georgia	
	n	n per cent	n	n per cent
Always or frequently	13	55	41	77
Sometimes	8	33	7	13
Infrequently or rarely	3	12	5	10
Totals	24		53	

Appendix B, Qn. C22.

It is no uncommon thing for workers of many kinds, including managers, professionals and self-employed, to have a backlog of work and decisions to be made about priorities. Stress may result but not be particularly 'distressing' or damaging. The question of disquiet and anxiety is clear in these respondents from other information.

Overload was seen as mainly caused by lack of staff in both countries. From my observations, the Georgia workers were considerably more overloaded and frantic than the Northumberland workers, and practitioners felt that while overload was not solely the fault of top management, they did feel that their managers were

not pressing as hard as they should do, their respective political bodies. Managers felt the practitioners did not understand the complexities of dealing with the political machinery to get resources. The acuteness of the problem in Georgia was the subject of an editorial in the Atlanta Journal and Constitution (1988) which said that county child welfare officials complained they were so badly understaffed they could respond only in those cases "where we see blood or hear the screams." While the understaffing problem in Northumberland is a severe contributor to stress, there appears to be a greater reservoir of understanding the problem even if politician are not prepared to publicly acknowledge it.

The Georgia workers have the additional pressure from the Department of Human Resources budget office to decrease the financial eligibility error rate as a priority over all other services, which takes away resources from the Child and Adult Protective Services preventing a balanced emphasis on quantity and quality of work at the expense of quality.

Practitioners in both Georgia and Northumberland felt the department expected too much of them. They talked about work overload in terms of cases, suggesting that their feelings of overload were aggravated by the resource shortage - trying to locate resources took time from other aspect of case management which added considerably to their stress. Both Northumberland and Georgia practitioners were concerned that the heavy burden of their workload would result in their making errors of judgment to the detriment of their clients and repercussion for themselves.

Workers in both agencies complained more about psychological rather than physical intrusion of work into the private life. Respondents from both countries complained of "taking work worry home in my head" and "sometimes when I'm with the family I drift away to my clients".

Although there were only a small number of supervisors in the both Northumberland and Georgia discussion groups, the majority of these despairingly commented on their overload, which in addition to their job responsibility was exacerbated by demands from both their line manager and practitioners - emotional demands from below being much more emotionally debilitating than the policy demands from above. An additional stress is their lack of supervisory training to prepare them for their role. Supervisors admitted their awareness of their practitioner's overload, but they had no alternative to allocating the work, which generated a mixture of guilt and anxiety.

Northumberland does not have a group comparable to the consultants in Georgia which is an advisory State Office group responsible for the innovation and maintenance of service delivery programs in the counties. They are overburdened and under-resourced to the point of feeling ineffective, causing some to question their own competence to do the job, and feeling that their bosses did realize they were overloaded but gave only faint acknowledgement of it because they did not know how to handle it.

The Northumberland County Hall senior managers are not required to come up with high profile results as is the Georgia Divisional Director. He is constantly under political scrutiny and pressure from the legislature which demands quick measurable solutions rather than a long term strategy. Because of this, he in turn puts continual pressure on those below him in the organization to produce them.

Personal competance

The Georgia workers might appear to show less concern about having insufficient skills and knowledge for the job, in spite of there being a higher proportion of qualified workers in Northumberland. Table 5 shows the responses.

TABLE 5. Feelings of insufficient knowledge and skill

How often	Northumberland		Georgia	
	n	n per cent	n	n per cent
Always or frequently	9	38	13	25
Sometimes	15	62	28	53
Hardly ever, rarely or never			12	23
Totals	24		53	

Appendix B, Qn. C25. Approximated percentages may not sum to 100.

The lesser frequency of "always" or "frequently" in Georgia, and especially the twelve who almost never feel it, have to be interpreted with the awareness of the caution exercised by this group in the written responses. Lack of knowledge and skill proved to be a major disquiet with respondents in both agencies in the interviews. A number openly admitted their anxiety in the absence of provision by the agencies for the updating of skills to handle new societal problems.

WORK AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Physical conditions

Accommodation and office conditions were generally felt to be acutely inadequate in both Georgia and Northumberland, but the conditions were considerably worse in the two urban counties in Georgia. In the questionnaires, while over half of the Northumberland workers (14) reported 'poor', 70 per cent of the Georgians did (36). (Appendix B, Qn. C4).

Senior management in both agencies rarely mentioned the poor office conditions within which their area and county staff worked. This was interpreted by most area and county workers as indifference. Middle managers (area officers and county directors) in the two agencies acknowledged the poor accommodation, and claimed there was little they could do about this. While this was of concern to both agencies, it was not dwelt upon because of the many other more critical problems.

Physical danger and the risk of litigation

Social work is one of the care professions in which stress is a consequence of exposure to risk of physical danger. If workers are suffering from excessive work loads, in which mis-judgements and mistakes are more likely to occur, the risk of these leading to physical assault or to litigation is increased.

While it was evident from the interviews that respondents in both agencies reflected on the issue, it was the Georgians who were the most concerned. In the questionnaires it was they produced the greater proportion (42 or 80 per cent) of those rating as less than satisfactory the Department's action reduce the personal risk in carrying out the work, against the Northumbrians two thirds (16). (Appendix B, Qn. C24)

There was clearly an increasing stress as violence in urban areas of Georgia rapidly increases. These practitioners saw no sign of management concern for their safety, but I think that most of the managers were not indifferent to the physical safety of their staff but lacked practical solutions. This concern was hardly mentioned among the Northumberland social workers, probably because the county remains predominantly rural with small industrial towns. However, in the densely populated urban areas of Britain this problem has also become a major concern.

Only in Georgia was litigation a primary concern which overshadowed their everyday work. However, while it made them cautious, it did not paralyze them. Practitioners still went out and tried innovative solutions. It was obvious to me that the higher up the hierarchy, the greater was the degree of caution and self protection because of the fear of expensive settlements. The States has a much more litigious society, reflecting another cultural difference between the two nations.

Employment policies

The quality of work life does significantly affect attitudes toward one's job and the aggravation or mollification of work stress. For this reason respondents were asked in the questionnaire to rate the employement policies and benefits of their departments compared with other Social Services Departments. A striking difference emerges. 89 per cent (47) of the Georgians answered "average" or above, while of the Northumbrians 70 per cent (17) answered "reasonable" or below (Appendix B, Qn. B2).

Georgia workers' perception of the employment policies and benefits were probably influenced by the economic realities of living in the States without decent employment-related benefits such as health insurance and paid sick and vacation leave and retirement pensions, concerns - especially access to health-related benefits - which the Northumberland have to a much lesser extent. While the stress

related to employment was clearly high among Children and Adult Protective Services workers and aggravated by feelings of job insecurity for many, it was necessary to tolerate such a situation in the interest of family economic security.

Promotion opportunities

Lack of career advancement has the potential for generating stress particularly in a "disturbed organization." On the other hand promotional opportunities in a "healthy" work setting increases job satisfaction which lessens stress. To gauge the opportunities for promotion in their settings, respondents were asked to rate their opportunity for getting promotion (Table 6).

TABLE 6. Promotion opportunities

Rating	Northumberland		Georgia	
of opportunities	n	n per cent	n	n per cent
Excellent or good	5	21	19	36
Fair or less or don't know	19	79	34	64
Totals	53		24	

Appendix B, Qn. C21.

The interviews confirmed the picture of restricted promotion prospects in both agencies. Perhaps the greater hope recorded by the Georgians in the questionnaire was, apart from the general postitive gloss, and indication of their greater concern with extrinsic job factors.

An interesting light is cast on this issue by the responses to questions about the most or least liked features of the job.

Most and least liked job features

Figures 7 and 8 are the responses to questions asked about the three things workers liked most and liked least about their jobs. It is striking to me that the job satisfactions cited by the Georgians include job security and benefits, not mentioned at all in Northumberland. Conversely, the Northumbrians mostly cite features of the work itself and of relations with colleagues, which inter alia are also mentioned by the Georgians. Practitioners really do seem bothered by paper work and procedures which they feel are unnecessarily burdensome. All are troubled by the sense of lack of means to carry out the work, and by obstructions to it from procedures and rules. The Northumberland group again show concern for limited expertise.

FIGURE 7. Most liked aspects of the job

	Northumberland	Georgia
Practitioners	Contact with clients Discretion in work scheduling Co-workers	Contact with clients Job security & benefits Discretion in work scheduling Co-workers
Supervisors, Team Leaders and First line mgrs	Supervision Co-workers and office life	Challenges of job Contact with clients Job security and benefits Co-workers
County Mgrs and Area Mgrs	Working for community Work variety Discretion in work	Influencing service devl. Job challenges Job security and benefits Co-workers
State Office Mgrs and County Hall Mgrs	Immediate colleagues Work variety	Job challenge Job security and benefits Staff discussions Problem solving
Consultants		Improving service delivery standards Consultation process Job security and benefits Discretion in scheduling

FIGURE 8. Least liked aspects of the job

	Northumberland	Georgia
Practitioners	Lack of recognition by management Inter-team wrangling Lack of resources Inadequate supervision Paperwork Low pay Rigid bureaucracy Limited expertise for broad range of work	Poor office accommodations Paperwork Work overload Lack of resources Too much responsibility Lack of support from management Negative attitude of co-workers Poor work atmosphere Poor communication with other agencies
Supervisors, Team Leaders and First Line mgrs	Preparing reports Work overload Overloading practitioners	Work and emotional overload Preparing reports Over-accountability Resource shortage Poor inter-agency communication Overloading practitioners
County Mgrs and Area Managers State Office	Resource shortage Lack of support	Excessive time on personnel matters Overload inefficiencies Conflict with admin support Financial constraints Frequent policy and procedural changes Lack of staff
State Office Mgrs and County Hall Mgrs	Rigid bureaucracy Role ambiguity Isolation from social workers	Lack of goal pursuit poor planning Work overload Punitive bureaucracy Lack of financial resources Political interference
Consultants		Lack of goal pursuance Poor planning Incompetent, dis-interested managers Poor supervision Work overload Limited responsibility Sudden staff changes

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Work relations

Within the two agencies, the levels of trust and morale were low, but were rock bottom in the Division of Family and Children Services.

It was hardly to be expected that there would be overall good and productive relations in these agencies under such adverse conditions. Yet a number in both agencies did not want change within their own groups. They indicated they drew support from their peers and valued their associations with them. According to the questionnaire, quality peer relations was one of the positives about their job.

Interviews revealed, especially in Northumberland, a high degree of animosity between State Office and its county offices and between County Hall and its area offices. The interviews further revealed the majority of State Office managers in Georgia were highly critical of one another, indicating fractured relations and a "looking out for one's own survival". The relations between senior managers in Northumberland were not particularly compatible, however the intense destructiveness of Georgia was not in evidence.

There were difficulties in working relations within the county and area offices, disagreements between management and practitioners, with supervisors caught in the middle, but relations between them and their headquarters were much more negative and mutually suspicious.

The external stresses imposed not only by the lack of resources but also by constant and sometimes blatant political interference and corruption is accepted as an integral part of Georgia state society. This greatly exacerbates the existing divisive internal relations among the Child and Adult Protective Services workers. Although their Northumberland counterparts

experienced political interferences, they were not as frequent, flagrant and disabling as they were in Georgia.

Supervision and support

Early in the study, as I expected, it became apparent that supervision and its integral ingredient of support was a serious source of concern to most workers on both sides of the Atlantic, more explicitly among many practitioners. However, the concern in Georgia appeared to be more chronic in nature, with accompanying frustration that support from both line manager and supervisor was scant, if not deficient. This dissatisfaction may stem from the frequency of supervision or from its content and perceived purpose. Several of the questionnaire items were designed to throw light on these questions. As has mentioned previously, the Georgia responses have positive bias when compared with the interviews and other information, but even this discrepancy is indicative of the situation existing.

I was surprised that the number in both agencies indicated on the questionnaire that they received supervision so regularly, ie weekly and biweekly (8 or one third Northumberland, and 15 or 28 per cent Georgia). This may have arisen due to what respondents defined as supervision. Certainly there were those practitioners who remarked how "helpful" or "good" their supervisory support was while many other complained that "chit-chat" or "quick checking everything is fine sessions" were seen as a form of supervision. Clearly the majority of Georgians receive supervision based on self or supervisor initiation (18 or 53 per cent). A third of the Northumberland workers reported that they do not receive supervision at all.

As to the quality of the 'work monitoring and supervision', the Georgian workers gave high ratings on the questionnaire with 87 per cent (46) giving positive ratings of "average" to "excellent". Only 20 per cent (5) of the Northumbrians gave these ratings (none "excellent") (Appendix B, Qn. C2.) Again, here is an example of

the Georgia interview and questionnaire findings not being compatible. In the interviews a large number of Georgians were very critical of the monitoring and supervisory process, whereas the Northumbrians were generally consistent in the questionnaire responses and interview comments.

In both agencies practitioners reported instances of supervision but they were abbreviated experiences and varied in frequency and quality. Generally in both agencies supervision was not an institutionalized process and this did not seem to be of concern to management. With a few exceptions, practitioners viewed their team leaders or supervisors as accessible and classified them within a mental scale ranging to being very helpful and/or supportive to "useless" or "impervious to my worries." Northumberland practitioner on the whole, while capable of being negative about their team leaders, were less censorious of their perceived shortcomings than most of their contemporaries in Georgia were of their supervisors.

Practitioners in Georgia tended to view the supervisory role as primarily a mechanism for insuring their compliance to agency policy. I got the impression that, unlike Northumberland practitioners, they seemed more intimidated by this process and felt less supported, but also felt their supervisors were carrying through expectations from above, so it wasn't unusual for practitioners to blame the predicament (ie incompetence, ineffectualness) on county management for overloading supervisors which prevented them from giving them attention. There was evidence from both agencies that a number of practitioners viewed their supervisors as vacillating between support for them and allegiance to county management. The bottom line for many practitioners as regards their confidence in their supervisors was judged on their willingness to get the resources for their clients. For both the Northumberland and Georgia practitioners, it is inevitable that in being advocates for their clients, they would come into conflict with administrative requirements of the organization.

One questionnaire item asked respondents to indicate how often they felt their decisions were in conflict with the expectations of their supervisor. Table 7 shows the results.

TABLE 7. Decisions in conflict with supervisor

How often	Northumberland		Georgia	
	n	per cent	n	n per cent
Often or sometimes	13	54	25	47
Rarely or never	11	46	28	53
Totals	24		53	

Appendix B, Qn. C1.

These findings appear to indicate that the Georgians were less often in conflict with their supervisor or line manager than were the Northumbrians. However, from my interview observations, more Georgian than Northumbrian social workers were in conflict with their supervisors, but they frequently maintained their silence, feeling disagreement was fruitless or fearing possible consequences if they did otherwise.

The tendency of the Georgia workers to 'play safe' in these responses is clear. Some indication of why, is given in the reported content and purpose of supervision sessions, in Table 8. The ingredients in evidence in the monitoring and supervisory process which the Georgians listed most often in the questionnaire were (1) accountability, (2) to ensure your compliance with agency policy and (3) protection of the department. The Northumberland listed most often (1) concern for clients, (2) accountability and (3) supervisor's self-protection most often.

TABLE 8. Focus of supervision

Focus of supervision	Northumberland n	Northumberland n per cent	Georgia n	Georgia n per cent
Quality control	5	21	20	38
Workload management	8	33	20	38
Professional development	7	29	16	30
Management development	6	25	12	23
Accountability	12	50	32	60
Concern for clients	14	58	27	51
Your supervisors' self protection	11	46	23	43
Protection of the dept	9	36	28	53
To ensure your compliance with agency policy	7	29	30	57
Your own protection	6	25	17	32

Appendix B, Qn. C3. Multiple responses.

As stated previously, supervision is a principal process in facilitating quality social work practice. Its application in the voluntary sectors of Britain and America continues to be taken more seriously, however resource shortage is cutting into the use of the supervisory process in these areas. As indicated elsewhere, although the full social work supervision process which comprises management accountability, education or professional development and support, is infrequently applied in Georgia and Northumberland, where it has it has mostly has been associated with the supervisor and practitioner, and not with managers.

Some managers in both agencies who admitted the value of supervision I felt were sincere, while a number of others were engaged in a form of token acknowledgement probably for my benefit. A large majority of the managers judged the key ingredients of the supervisory process to be necessary to the supervision of managers but were resigned to it "being a mirage and when it happens it is a departmental aberration," and "around here you get control not

supervision." Quite clearly, managers in both agencies did not receive proper supervision. What passed for supervision between line manager and subordinate in Georgia was the institution of a mechanism that favoured the line manager protecting himself - "his interest in me was protecting his own arse."

Managers in Georgia were subject more so than those in Northumberland to rigid control rather than accountability. This I believe was another cultural difference. From my own limited experiences of working in both public social services and education in Georgia and the study and discussions with a cross section of people in and out of the state services, I have found that public services are intimidating in the way they keep very close watch on what workers do, allowing them very little leeway for taking the initiative. Northumberland managers felt restricted, but there was not the encirclement of watchfulness of ones' work as found in Georgia.

Organizational climate

It can hardly be said from the two previous chapters that the working atmosphere in either agency was happy and supportive. The questionnaire responses in which the Northumbrians predominantly rated the working atmosphere as "close and friendly" can be seen as referring primarily to relations with immediate co-workers, on of the most liked features of the work. The Georgians mostly rate atmosphere as "distant but not unfriendly", which is a less protective response than many. (Appendix B, Qn. C11).

The ratings of agency performance in the questionnaire show perhaps the most striking discrepancy between the Georgian scores and interview results. Table 9 shows most of them rating performance as "excellent" or "good".

TABLE 9. Ratings of agency performance

Rating of performance	Northumberland n	Northumberland n per cent	Georgia n	Georgia n per cent
Excellent or good	-	-	34	64
Average or reasonable	18	75	12	23
Poor or don't know	6	25	7	13
Totals	24		53	

This perception by the Georgians was much at odds with the interviews, where generally respondents were highly critical of their agency, expressing anxiety, disquiet and in some cases heavy criticism of the agency's functioning. A possible explanation for such inconsistency is that Child and Adult Protective Services respondents were reluctant to translate their criticism to paper, worrying about who would have access to them. This was confirmed in one instance in a private conversation I had with one of the female respondents who said, "please don't quote me on this but if I were to answer this on paper, my performance appraisal sheet would be negative." In the interviews a large number of Child and Adult Protective Services respondents were more revealing and, as indicated in the section on interviews, they were frequently wanting assurance from me that I would maintain confidentiality; they commented "don't tell I said this" and "if they knew I said this I could be fired."

The Northumberland Field Work Services Division respondents were much less worried about revealing their critical views on the questionnaire regarding their agency's performance. Overall this was compatible with their interviews and group discussions. Comparing the Northumberland and Georgia respondents in this instance, the Northumberland were more confident than their Georgia counterparts, perhaps because they felt less intimidated by management and they felt more secure in their jobs, reinforced by "the union" to which many belonged, and a realization that

Northumberland was in a region that was highly politically critical of the central government's social policies.

Indications of working climate are also given by the questions about freedom to talk to a superior, support when in error, and recognition of good work.

In general supervisors or team leaders in the two agencies were prepared to seek help from their line managers (Appendix B. Qn. C23). Nevertheless, there was a considerable reluctance among these line managers, greater in Georgia, to share work problems with their own immediate line managers. This I believe was significant further evidence of the low levels of trust between managerial subordinates and superiors and a further exacerbation of individual and organizational work stress.

There was less certainty that workers would get support if they made an error of judgement. Only a minority recorded "yes". While only in Northumberland did anyone actually write "never", there were unexpectedly high "don't know" responses in both agencies (Table 10).

TABLE 10. Departmental support if errors of judgment

Would support	Northumberland		Georgia	
	n	n per cent	n	n per cent
Yes	3	12	15	28
Maybe	7	29	21	40
Never	5	20	-	-
Don't know	9	38	38	32
Totals	24		53	

Appendix B, Qn. C28.

These findings correspond to those views of respondents in the interviews who discussed the anxiety and stress engendered when uncertain as to what extent department support would be behind them if they made a mistake.

Praise and recognition from one's supervisor or line manager is an essential ingredient in maintaining job satisfaction and mitigating endemic work stress. One questionnaire item asked about the extent to which they were satisfied with the recognition they received from their supervisor or line manager when they had done a good piece of work (Table 11).

TABLE 11. Recognition for good work

Rating of recognition	Northumberland n	Northumberland n per cent	Georgia n	Georgia n per cent
Very satisfied or satisfied	8	33	28	53
Neither way or dissatisfied	16	67	25	47
Totals	24		53	

It would appear, not surprisingly, that the Georgians report less readily that they are dissatisfied, while the Northumberland results are more in line with all the interview information.

A major source of disquiet and complaint was the feeling that decisions affecting the way people worked, and what they had to do, were taken without their involvement, or even without their knowledge.

This is revealed in the questionnaire, with the usual requirement to interpret the Georgia figures in the light of interview and other material. Table 12 shows the results. It will be seen that it is only in Northumberland that the respondents

replied "seldom" or "never" to the question 'How often are you consulted ?' Only in Georgia did anybody say "always".

TABLE 12. Frequency of consultation about changes

How often	Northumberland		Georgia	
	n	n per cent	n	n per cent
Always	-	-	8	15
Usually	5	21	16	30
Occasionally	6	25	29	55
Seldom or never	13	54	-	-
Totals	24		53	

The interviews revealed a different story. The lack of consultation was seen as a problem and significant stressor. Was this another situation where the Georgia workers were reluctant to commit true feelings to paper? Two Georgia practitioners' comments in interview reflect a view held by many Children and Adult Protective Services staff about consultation concerning changes to ones job. One remarked, "You are told, never asked how to do your job" and "Consultation and participation are like bits of the Constitution, more myth than fact."

Most people at all levels complained that they did not feel that they were encouraged to be involved in the influencing the way in which the agency is run. This is what I mean by lack of participation in this context.

A number of both Northumberland and Georgia workers' sense of participatory involvement was confined to their immediate task. While this was felt by people at all levels, the more vociferous proponents of this sentiment were to be found at practitioner level. Generally, from practitioners upwards, each level viewed the one above them as having more opportunity to be involved and to participate than they had. Nevertheless, on closer scrutiny during

the interviews, it was evident that a significant number of these were aware that authority over them did not equate with greater participation in the maintenance and development of their agencies.

Almost all the consultants in the Child and Adult Protective Services suffered strong feelings of exclusion from the important decisions that "come from (senior managers) up there." Interestingly, some consultants predicted that not "listening to us" about serious consequences of poorly thought through child welfare programmes would bring problems. Continuing media coverage in Georgia about the "state's wretched welfare system" is justifying that prediction.

Northumberland senior managers, like their peers in Georgia, realized that in working in public agencies they must accept that important decisions on policy and practice will be subject to political process. But the large proportion in Georgia, unlike those in Northumberland, saw their exclusion from "being a part of this place is all in the nature of this State," referring to a recurring theme during the study, that public institutions in Georgia "exist for the use of its established order." This institutionalized attitude superimposed on, or reinforced by, the Divisional Director's highly directive attitude denied individual or group participatory attempts, leaving many feeling "uninvolved or isolated." Among the Northumberland managers, the main opposition to "democratic participation" in the Section was seen to come nominally from the Principal Assistant Director for Field Work Services but significantly from the Director of Social Services.

I recall studies by Jick (1985) and Levine et al. (1979) which looked at the effects of governmental cutbacks in the Georgia public sector. They noted that stress caused by budget cutbacks added considerably to the confusion and conflict within public agencies and programmes. Almost all those interviewed in both Northumberland and Georgia, saw the source of much of their stress to be the current economic policies of their two governments.

According to a senior manager at the State Office, the Division of Family and Children Services was founded on "starved resources" with recent cuts compounding the problem. Britain's social services departments, while never generously funded, have not been funded on such low resources. Nevertheless, with the current move towards reemphasizing of residual social services in Britain, I have little doubt that it will not be long before they are faced with a similar situation. The only thing that will stop this from happening will be Britain's membership in the EEC and its social as well as economic obligations under the Treaty of Rome.

KEY PERCEIVED SOURCES OF STRESS

I have identified, from all the information available, the sources of stress seen by respondents which appeared most significant. They are listed here in order of their significance, by way of a brief summary before the analysis in Part IV.

Lack of resources

From all the interviews and group discussions, respondents saw lack of resources as the central stressor responsible for precipitating the other stressors they mentioned.

It was very obvious that both agencies were in fact suffering from severe resource and staff shortages which were seen as major contributors to stress by all levels in both agencies.

Overload

An immediate consequence of lack of resources in the ever-increasing work load. The resulting overload on workers itself produces significant stress.

Work relations

The literature of Cherniss (1980a) and 1980b), Pines and Aronson (1981), Shinn et. al (1984) and French and Caplan (1973) asserts that a major potential source of stress for human service workers is the quality of relations within work organizations. My research supports those findings.

Supervision and support

An early assumption of mine, which is also supported in the literature, is that proper supervision is an important and neglected support in social work agencies. There is ample evidence of lacks and shortcomings in the supervision arrangement in both agencies, with supervision being used as a means of control rather than as a support, particularly in Georgia.

Lack of participation

The sense of being excluded or ignored when decisions affecting the work of the agencies are taken runs through the data. It did not come up as a specific topic of conversation but was pervasive thoughout discussion in a variety of ways and as an aspect at almost all other topics. When people mentioned it, it was a painful experience to get them to say what they specifically meant. Most people, I suspect, did not give it much thought - almost an automatic complaint.

Physical danger and the risk of litigation

These were primarily the concerns of the Georgia workers, because they added anxiety to their daily lives, enhancing the risks attendant upon mistakes and misjudgements ,and hence exacerbating the stress.

PART IV

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chapter 12
STRESS AND ORGANIZATION

In this chapter, I consider the value of the term 'stress' in gathering my data. I look at my findings in terms of the individual feelings and defences aroused by the perceived stressors, and then consider these in relation to organizational functioning.

Stress reconsidered

My data collecting identified those organizational factors that were perceived as stressors, that is as producing a wide range of specific feelings and behaviour which were called stress by the respondents.

So what did this mean? Whatever the confusion surrounding the definition of the term 'stress', it had proved to be a useful trigger word for eliciting organizational factors that caused 'a miscellany of distressing feelings'. It had proved valuable in tapping into the emotional upheaveals of individuals, but it was clear that they were using the term with considerable licence, unknowingly. It was a convenient means for them to reveal, package, label and try to explain their bewildering and discomforting feelings. It also opened up the avenues of access to understanding the organizational dynamics of what was happening in the agencies to produce the distress, the despondency and the impaired performance which was rife.

In order to understand the variety of data on individual reactions, I put it into three categories. Firstly there are the key perceived stressors which I have listed in the previous chapter. In the selection of these stressors I was influenced by the literature. This was a main influence in achieving some coherence in my data collection and preliminary analyis. Secondly, there is

the wide variety of feelings associated with these stressors. Thirdly, there are a number of coping mechanisms and defences employed by people. The following Figure 9 codifies these three categories, which can be seen as if they were 'presenting symptoms'.

Feelings of distress

There was considerable evidence of three important ingredients, anxiety, conflict and guilt, found in the variety of emotional responses of both managers and practitioners.

Let's look a little more at the general dynamics that personal social services workers face in doing their jobs.

The social worker concentrates on interactions with and the interdependence between peoples' environmental systems. The goal is to intervene in these systems so as to remove or minimize distress, enabling people to live their lives as fully as possible. What are these systems? In the case of clients the principal ones are the individual, the family, and the community or institution. Each of these systems has its own distinguishing features which forms a permeable boundary that separates each from the other. That which lies outside a boundary belongs to the environment. To work with the client, the social worker needs access to these systems, particularly beginning with that of the clients.

Social workers tend to deal with people who are in various states of emotional disarray, which exposes the worker to an array of powerful feelings from clients. These feelings form a significant part of the worker's everyday encounter. Not unusually workers experiences the miscellany of uncertain and troubled behaviour alone, having to cope with its emotional impact on their own. They have a need themselves for the same opportunity of catharsis and the associated support which they allow the client.

FIGURE 9. Perceived organizational stressors and reactions to them.

'Presenting symptoms'

1. From 'stress' as an heuristic trigger word:

KEY PERCEIVED STRESSORS				
Lack of resources exacerbates:				
Overload	Work conditions	Supervision	Working relations	Organizational climate

2. Producing in people:

VARIOUS FEELINGS OF DISTRESS					
Guilt over -failure -error -bad feelings	Anxiety about being overwhelmed or failing	Anxiety about being damaged -physical -psychic -professnl	Anxiety about isolation -support -supervsn	Anger about -frustration -betrayal	Despair Defeat Withdrawal

3. To which people produce:

VARIOUS DEFENCES ('COPING MECHANISMS')
Taking bad feelings home
Grumbling and griping
Manipulating the system
Projection - blaming management or clients or society
Passivity in face of inner anger
Collusive denial of agency faults
Seeking structure
Escape from pressures of practice through promotion
Illusions - managers have it easy; it'll get better
Withdrawal from client or work or commitment

In managing the fragile volatile boundaries of their clients social workers have to defend their own from the assault of their clients' feelings and those created within themselves by their own anxieties. They usually see self as a reparative creature who "likes helping people". Here are workers wanting to do "good" and yet constrained not only by their agencies'deficiencies but by their own emotional and physical limitations.

There are feelings of guilt stirred by the punitive self that resides in all humans. This facet of the self can lead to workers punishing clients for reasons that have their roots in personal history and personality. When this happens it is compounded by society whose approach to the social services reflects control and admonishment rather than rehabilitation and support.

The individual worker has to make choices between what is good for self and what is good for the other person be it client or colleague. This can generate feelings of guilt when the individual is unable to give the degree of benevolence they would like for reasons which may range through the lack of resources, restrictive policies or regulations, work overload and time constraints, or simple inability to feel positive towards a client or a fellow worker.

In the study, workers were coping poorly with a range of anxieties about not being able to cope with the job. People said they didn't know how long they could cope with the 'high stress levels' (high anxiety). They feared a loss of competence, of their jobs, of self esteem, of 'being a failure'. This fear of failing in work is tied in with prospective damage to self image and loss of identity. There is in the literature an implicit recognition of this phenomenon, for instance in the discussion of building confidence and competence through supervision, but no explicit discussion of the fear of failing, or of how to handle it (Kadushin, 1985; Middleman and Rhodes, 1985). I believe this reflects the difficulty social workers and supervisors find in discussing failure

because they do not want to be seen as 'negative'. For instance in Georgia, supervisors already have enough hostility to deal with in carrying out the demands of management and were reluctant to make adverse judgemental statements to the social worker about how well the worker was doing.

Defences

Individuals in the two agencies employed a variety of concious mechanisms and unconcious defences for coping with the ever-regenerating frustrations, conflicts and pressures.

Some dealt with their feelings by externalizing them with others such as colleagues, friends, family, and even clients. Some grumbled discreetly with their friends or took their "bad" feelings home for eventual cathartic release, at the expense of their family relations.

Griping was a fairly pervasive way of coping with the factors seen as stressful or frustrating but for some this was quite unproductive as it seemed only to add to their anxieties and reinforce a sense of helplessness. I found this especially so among those whose emotional boundaries were fragile. Such individuals are often vulnerable to those who, unable to contain a high emotional state, discharge it on to others.

Others manipulated the system. For instance, practitioners tried to find ways to reduce tight oversight of their work revealing only selected information to their supervisors, to manoeuvre the outcome to their inclinations. There were some who welcomed, or perhaps encouraged, crises which deflected their thinking about uncomfortable feelings within themselves, if only temporarily.

There was evidence of instances where practitioners projected their frustrated feelings on to particular managers. This may have given the practitioners a transient relief, but served to

provoke tensions between them and their managers. More often than not managers hit back by accusing field staff of being too idealistic and not being in touch with the real world, or of over-identifying with clients, which of course some did.

There were those who retained their feelings within themselves. With colleagues this revealed itself in being unusually quiet and compliant, fearing that to do otherwise would release an uncontrollable inner anger. Some become passively aggressive with behaviour such as stubbornness, procrastination and obstructionism. Others, who did not know how to release their dissatisfaction in a manner that would not be misinterpreted, just remained quiet and grudgingly got on with the job.

For those few workers in Georgia who acclaimed the relative invincibility of their agency I believe it was the only way they could cope with the imperfections of their work place. I believe this idealization to be a collusive denial of the reality because they were individually aware of the imperfection of the agency but were unable to acknowledge this to others.

It may well have been that some of them liked to have the security of a highly structured work environment. However, there was a larger number, particularly of practitioners, who disliked what they saw as a mechanistic and compassionless structure around them. For these people this was claustrophobic and was seen a negative use of power This situation was viewed as a vote of no confidence in their integrity and a desire for power and dominance by managers to further their own ends and protect themselves.

To have hierarchical authority was seen by non-managers on more than one occasion with envy as an opportunity for an easier life within a more tolerable framework of organizational accountability. There was justification in the practioners' viewing promotion to supervisor and above as retreating from the pressures of practice stress. Such promotion enabled the shedding of

caseloads and gave them supervisory authority over others "and you didn't have to leave the office." There were managers who admitted that in spite of their managerial burdens and stresses they were glad to have left the field. One Georgia manager said "to-day its tough out there, you'll burnout in two to three years".

It has a ring of truth to say that the higher up the ladder one goes the greater the latitude in discretion over the allocation of resources, for instance, and the greater the accompanying authority over supervisors and social workers. The pressures that the managers experience are of a different nature. They relate to managing staff, the allocation of work load, the distribution of resources, standards of practice, and social and political accountability. Most workers, if pushed, have a realistic perception of the difficulties of the managers, even though they remain critical of the way managers do their job. Keeping alive a mirage of the easy life was a way of focusing blame for their troubles on management and so avoiding examining their own interaction with those organizational factors they identified as stress inducing.

There were many practitioners, particularly in Northumberland, who seemed to live in a form of self-created hope or illusion that somehow in the future things would get better. As I see it, this was another mechanism for offsetting the likely reality that "things" will improve minimally if at all. This encapsulating of self in the fragile cocoon of optimism carries some through the experience of working in an agency within which disenchantment is pervasive. Without it, the level of functioning would be more detrimental than to the self than it is.

There were individuals who found various ways of dissociating themselves from the distress of the task by emotional or physical withdrawal. Physical withdrawal involved absences from work through feigned illness, taking unofficial time off instead of making visits to clients, or staying in the office and feigning

paperwork to avoid clients. Emotional withdrawal took the form of a denial of feeling and loss of concern for clients, or of a retreat into the rules and regulations of the agencies - "majoring in the minors", which is trivializing through the creation of unnecessary paperwork, and establishing petty rules and procedures which serve to further constrain workers. In Georgia trivial infractions of time and dress were given an immediate attention compared with larger professional issues of professional development and standards of care service delivery.

Agency dynamics

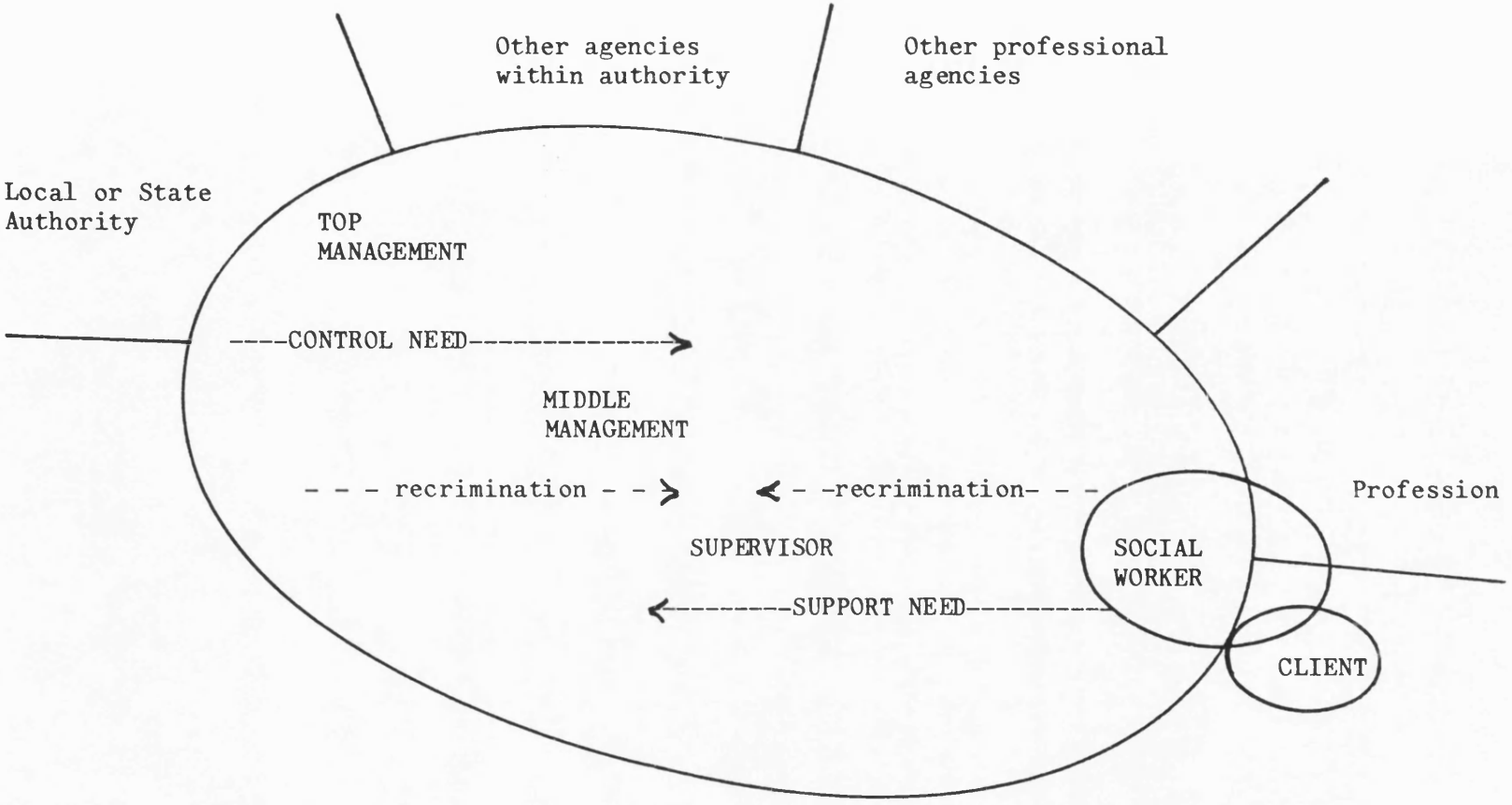
Having looked at the distresses and defences of the individual I now intend to consider these at the agency level and how these interact. From my research and personal experience, I believe it is reasonable to make some general assumptions about the position of social work agencies in their social setting.

Social work agencies are subject to pressures from several forces outside their own boundaries often over which they have little control. These pressures bear differently upon managers and field staff. Figure 10 illustrates the pressures acting upon and within the agencies.

Social workers are caught in what I see as a fourfold conflict. As shown, they relate to the needs of the client, the requirements of the agency, the expectations of their profession, and the pressures from society.

Clients come from society with problems which are often caught up in society's ambivalence about whether it should care for or control those who do not fit its expectations of behaviour. This sends mixed signals to the social worker, who is expected on the one hand to care for clients who need help, and on the other hand to control or discipline those who are a threat to the stability of society or its weaker members.

FIGURE 10. The agency in its environment



Additionally, social workers are trapped by the difficulty of accommodating the needs of the client and those of the agency,. The needs of the client are for emotional and material support, whereas those of the agency are for the social worker to adhere to its policies and regulations which may be in conflict with the worker's judgment about the client's needs. Where the field workers are enforcing action against individuals, for instance in compulsory admission to hospital or the removal of children from their families, the conflict between professional and agency interests are reduced. In this case workers may handle the task with greater ease than in the case where the workers and clients negotiate therapeutic contracts and the agency seeks to control the conduct of the work. This is another instance where the problem is much sharper in Georgia than in Northumberland.

This is a bewildering and distressful predicament for field workers who look to their supervisors and managers for support in coping with overwhelming feelings. The opportunities for reality testing rest in the working relations of the social worker with supervisor and with colleagues. Without it, there is a risk of becoming uncertain of the credibility of their perceptions of reality.

As shown in the research neither of the two agencies had an effective supervisory caring system. This gave rise to the image among the field workers that managers did not care and were more concerned with accommodating political demands in their own interest. As indicated earlier, field staff sometimes coped with their distress by projecting hostility on to management which served to add to ever-increasing tension.

Supervisors are in a dilemma. 'My heart and commitment is with the practitioners. I know what it's like. Now I've got the managers saying they expect me to carry out the policies which make it bloody tough for the social workers.' This can be aggravated if, which was frequently the case in these agencies, they have not been

prepared for their supervisory positions and have only their practice experience to call upon. Increasingly as social work knowledge and skills expand with accompanied emphasis on specialization, it is understandable that supervisors may feel threatened by those they supervise. Some did. This served to undermine supervisors' confidence in their own proficiency to supervise as well as monitoring of adherence to agency administrative requirements.

The other prime generator of conflict within the agencies was the exposure of the top managers to the external pressures on the agency. Managers in public service agencies must attend to the demands of their political masters who expect their publicly mandated policies to be implemented. This was aggravated when politicians, more dramatically in Georgia, moved from general monitoring of performance to capricious interference in day to day operations. There is little managers could do about this situation without perhaps placing themselves in some form of jeopardy, though this would not have occured in Northumberland.

In the general case, managers must handle the interactions with a variety of other societal systems such as other care giving agencies, the police or the legal system. This involves the inevitable tensions of negotiating contracts with these organizations where there are different perceptions of what action should be taken, for instance where the police wish to prosecute a young offender and the agency wishes to counsel. As the general public have rather equivocal relation with the public social services, this further undermines management's efforts to maintain a confident image of their agencies.

Managers found themselves in a "push and pull" between the pressures on them from field staff on one side and the demands of political legislation and its creators on the other. This played a powerful factor in the contributing to the divisiveness evident in both agencies - more acerbic in Georgia. The conflict tired them

both physically and emotionally. To cope with this, managers did two major things. Firstly, for pragmatic survival reasons management on the whole gave priority to the expectations of their political masters. Secondly, to ensure they met these demands, they promoted increasing control over agency activities and behaviour. Management gave priority to control rather than support.

In addition, where feelings of hostility were projected downwards, field staff were seen as unsympathetic towards the managers' plight and as disloyal to them. This met the flak coming up. For both managers and field staff this was a no win situation because each blamed the other for their distress; a never ending circle of mutual recrimination.

Like field staff, managers had no support system and so had little opportunity to utilize their feelings constructively for their own development and that of the agency.

In Georgia, where a climate of control and tight monitoring were predominant there was little chance of an effective supervisory support system. This would require emphasis on maximizing workers' control over their own work and this would be too threatening. It was seen explicitly as an invitation to anarchy with managers fearing the loss of control over their subordinates. In Northumberland, while there was monitoring, there was more latitude given to social workers in carrying out the task. The emphasis was on avoiding disruption and bringing the agency adversely into public focus. Increasing overload had caused a deterioration in the supervisory support the basis of which was present.

Management was in a trap similar to that of field staff. Practitioners were pulled between client and agency management demands while managers were pulled between field staff and politicians.

Resources, overload and support

The majority of respondents from both agencies viewed the lack of resources as the central stressor exacerbating the other identified stressors. It is not that the others are unimportant in their own right, but that they might not be so bad if resources were more adequate.

This is not necessarily the case. Voluntary social work agencies have experienced under-resourcing all their lives, and yet their staff appear to live with it. This may be because they tend not to have the tight bureaucratization of the public services. They are less susceptible to public criticism and to political interference, and most able to be selective in the cases they take. These conditions are conducive to a more collegiate atmosphere and to a greater opportunity for the exercise of professional discretion.

Why then do the people in the two agencies place such store upon lack of resources? Clearly they see it as the prime source of pressure on work load. Overload is seen by the vast majority of respondents as a consequence of inadequate staffing and therefore a highly important pressure in its own right. This is not peculiar to social work, because it it evident that many in other occupations are subject to overload, and complain proudly of it.

I believe that many social workers and their managers who complained of an overload of work were experiencing an overload of distress. This led to concentrating attention on overload: holding allocation meetings, increasing regulatory systems, emphasizing time management and indulging in occasional restructuring. These contrivances were, I suspect, used to avoid dealing with the emotional human consequences of the two agencies' mechanistic management approach.

Overload intrudes on the time available for supervision and support for all staff. Not providing adequate support can make it difficult for people to manage their boundaries. Things are made worse by the added stress of not having the degree of public support that other professions like doctors and nurses receive. This I believe is because the medical and nursing professions are used by all strata of society - unlike social workers who are generally identified with the groups who carry some social stigma or threat. Such negative perceptions are a further attack on the social worker's self image and serve to weaken the social worker's professional persona.

Qualified practitioners who perceive themselves as professionals want to be treated as such. In Georgia there is a disregard for professionalism whereas in Northumberland, while management recognises social work qualifications, the complaint by field staff is that they are not given the discretion which they see as necessary to do the job.

Final words

The general thrust in both agencies is a fragmentation of working relations and a low level of morale. Within both agencies the various sections and teams have segmented themselves from the other parts of the agencies in pursuit of their own particular ends and were out of tune with the expectations of their headquarters staff.

The organizational control system in Georgia is punitive in an enterprise supposedly devoted to reparation. In Northumberland it has a parental authority about it which is lighter in touch. The conflicts which are generated in practitioners and in managers predispose them to act defensively and in way which reinforces the fragmentation and lessens the prospects of support.

Field staff and and managers in Northumberland had a greater identification with responsibility to clients than did those in Georgia. There, the atmosphere was more punitive and controlling, and therefore detracted from the possibility of managing clients in a more compassionate way than the workers were themselves treated. This was reflected in the tendency to withdraw from commitment to clients and in the concentration upon extrinsic factors in the job.

Staff in both agencies were in the main aware of a decreasing quality in their work and concerned with its impact on clients. Managers had the additional worry of the impact on their institutional support.

The maintenance of the quality of professional practice in Northumberland was a consequence of the commitment to professional standards of work. The protection of these standards was coming from within the individual professionals. Whatever the financial difficulties, politicians in Northumberland, compared with those in Georgia, showed a greater tolerance if not sympathy with the caring role of the personal social services.

In Georgia the protection of the work in the main came from a few workers who were committed to ensuring quality social work standards, but who had little influence. The majority of workers, if they were thus commmitted, did not make it evident. There were those who felt there was no point in concerning themselves with it anyway. The outcome is an emphasis on control to protect what the agency sees as quality work which is usually related to financial criteria. This in turn reinforces the punitive climate and further undermines those few who are committed to high standards of professional service delivery.

A serious concern emerges regarding the support of the various groups of staff. The social worker is supporting the clients, and is not receiving adequate support from supervisers, who in turn are not getting the support they require from higher

management. In turn management is having to bear the brunt of considerable external pressures without support. The resulting distress is being turned in on themselves and against one another. The agency is left unguarded and vulnerable. The way to deal with this situation is clearly to support the agency.

Chapter 13
REFLECTIONS

I began this research with burnout in mind, which at the time had become a popular term in the social worker's vocabulary. In view of the acclaimed pervasiveness of burnout I saw it as a route for finding out what organizational factors were causing social workers to experience disatisfaction and unhappiness, and affecting their work performance. Indeed, I had a notion that perhaps burnout was more rife than was realized and that most sufferers were able to hide what I thought might be a smouldering problem. However, it was through the literature on burnout and discussions with social workers and their managers that I soon learned that to confine the study to burnout would restrict examination of a whole range of behaviour that social workers saw as symptoms of burnout but which did not fit with the definitions in the literature; so I had to approach the matter from another perspective.

Since social workers also frequently used the term stress when talking about burnout, sometimes using the terms interchangeably, I decided to see if the exploration of the concept of stress would reveal the information I wanted. Information from my pilot study questionnaire, indicated my fresh approach as being very promising. Initially I chose an interactional definition of stress which I took from Lazarus (1978). Stress was described as ocurring when the individual does not have the necessary resources for some reason or other to cope with the demands currently being faced.

As indicated in the previous chapter, I was soon to learn of the inadequacy of this definition for the purpose of my research. What was emerging from the research, in the main, were feelings and behaviour that could not be accommodated within a definition restricted to the condition of excess demand. This meant that, for

me to have analysed my findings solely within this definition would have led to the exclusion of a host of emotional responses which were experienced as 'distressing' but did not arise from 'stress'. Some reactions were to stress in this sense of excess demand . Some reactions were shown by people whom I saw as being in various stages of burnout. The large majority of reactions were not within these categories.

Therefore, for my purposes the concept of stress as excess demand was of little use in understanding the organizational dynamics of what was happening in the agencies to produce the distress, the despondency and the impaired performance which was rife. The research has changed my perspective upon stress because I now appreciate that the perception of stress depends very much on the individual's subjective circumstances. My current perception of the notion of stress is manifested in the analysis of my data in Chapter 12. As I argued there, I see the usefulness of 'stress' as an heuristic instrument, but it is not a useful analytic tool.

This research took place at the time of breakdown of political consensus about the welfare state in Britain and with the abandonment of the 1960's reform era in the States. These occurrences have placed social work in the public sector on the defensive at a time when individual self-reliance is in the ascendant and responsibility of the individual to the community is in the descendant.

This changed emphasis in socio-economic policies has played a significant part in producing the overtone of despondency within the two agencies. The research, my own personal experiences and the ever burgeoning writings in the various social work and social services journals about staff stress give credence to my belief that the large majority of public personal social services organizations in both America and Britain are in a similar plight to those of Northumberland Social Services Department and the Georgia State Division of Family and Children Services.

Conflict between the values of social work and public personal social services is frequently underplayed in the debate about the causes of distress among staff. Social workers in training are sensitized to the importance of professional values. These embrace respect for client cultural and human diversity; client self-determination subject to not infringing the rights of others; and confidentiality. Other values include belief in the institutional rather than the residual approach to social services and advocacy and social action. These beliefs do not reside easily in the public personal social services organizations.

These agencies operate by capricious public mandate and are administered by classical management techniques to optimize organizational stability and reflect a contribution to the preservation of society's existing socio-political culture. With this set of circumstances conflict between practice aims and organizational expectations are agonizingly inevitable. Within a healthy organization, however, such conflict and dissent might serve as a catalyst to looking anew at approaches for dealing with an issue that will probably remain endemic to the personal social services scene.

Throughout my data collecting, all levels of staff expressed concern about the traditional bureaucratic structure which is common to the public sector in both countries. The elongated hierarchy ensures the distancing of managerial staff from the front-line operations. Apart from the negative reaction this can arouse in low level staff, the senior manager can become isolated from the pragmatics of happenings in the world of every day service delivery.

However, present efforts to reconstitute the public personal social services in the image of contemporary entrepreneurial organizations is not the salvation to its multifarious difficulties. Yet, in spite of literature examining the dissimilarities between the private and public sectors and pointing out the undesirability of such direction, the process goes on undeterred.

I believe it is desirable for public social services to encourage workers to have more say in their work, express their ingenuity and contribute to establishing goals and objectives. I suppose what I am asking for is a sort of "grass roots management" more refinely expressed as participative management. However, in the current socio-political climate this would be viewed as radical and the likelihood of this happening is most unlikely. Though a redesigning of the organizational structure of public social services systems in both Britain and American is desirable, again current attitudes would probably prevent this.

As indicated elsewhere, the future of the public personal social services remains uncertain. However, some fluidity has been injected into the situation by a rising concern about the consequences of contemporary social policies. This is more evident in Britain than America where the signs of increased concern about welfare issues are much fainter because there is a lack of national will to do anything about it. I hope this trend will slow down the demise of the public social services until a change in political philosophy enables their continuation strongly influenced by a good dose of organizational humanism.

What I want to say here is that having identified pervasive malfunction in public personnel social services I see it as obvious that the resolution of their predicament requires an expansive solution that is beyond the scope of local and state authorities.

I believe professional social work education has unintentionally exacerbated the problems for social workers in social services organizations. Social work students have not been given knowledge about social work agencies to help them understand the organizational dynamics of the work setting and begin to develop coping repertoires. This information abounds in universities and yet is rarely shared with the students. I am not talking about making them fit their systems uncritically but to help them handle their agencies shortcomings innovatively.

The one thing that will most help social workers to achieve a good balance between service to the client and their own well-being is good supervision. It is perfectly clear that the two agencies, and I believe this appplies to all public social service agencies, do not have the capacity to ensure proper supportive supervision which has traditionally been acclaimed as central to social work practice and management.

I believe that we in social work education can give very practical help to these overburdened agencies in the matter of supervision and support; for example, offering to undertake the consultative aspects of supervision, running self support groups, helping to design and maintain agency supervisory support systems, perhaps through secondments and joint appointments, and offering assistance in updating of social work skills and knowledge.

Failure to give attention to good support systems will only ensure the continued deterioration not only of staff morale but also service to the client. As a British social worker having had the opportunity to observe an American agency, I am concerned that unless we in this county improve supervision then our agencies may run into those difficulties faced by Georgia which have moved beyond the agency's capacity to handle.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Interviewer Recording Schedule, comprising 4 prompting questions which were spread over 6 pages, was used by the researcher to collect data from both British and American respondents during individual interview sessions. Although questions were asked in sequence, the design of the questionnaire enabled the interviewer to record information in other appropriate sections as was necessary.

Ref._____

INTERVIEWER RECORDING SCHEDULE

Interviewer Staff Positions

1. Ask: What do they experience or see as the key stresses in their work with the Department?

2. Ask: Why do they think the stresses occur?

3. Ask: Do they think training and staff development has a role in the management of the stresses to which they have referred?

4. Ask: Do they have a degree in Social Work? Yes( ) No( )

a. If so, do they think their professional training courses could have prepared them more effectively to cope with the stresses they have identified?

b. If not a degree in Social Work, ask if they think they have had sufficient preparation for the job?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESPONSES

(FOR NORTHUMBERLAND)
PLEASE NOTE

A. Tick on the right hand side of the response appropriate to your feelings/opinions unless otherwise stated.

B. Answer questions based on your interpretation and understanding of them.

C. Practitioner(s) = Senior Worker (Level 3), Level 2, Level 1 and Welfare Assistant.

D. Area Management Group = Area Social Services Officers and Social Work Team Leaders.

E. Division Management Group = Field Services Divisional Management Group - Principal Assistant Director, Principal Fieldwork Officers, Area Social Services Officers and Principal Social workers (Hospital).

F. County Hall Management = those senior/top managers located in the Field Services Division o the Social Services Department oat County Hall.

G. Principal Social Workers (Hospital).

(FOR GEORGIA)
(a) Check ( ) on the right hand side of the response appropriate to your feelings/opinions unless otherwise stated.

(b) Answer questions based on your interpretation and understanding of them.

(c) Direct Services Staff = Caseworker Principal, Caseworker Senior, Caseworker, and Homemaker/Community Worker.

(d) County Management = County Director, Deputy Director, County Program Director, Supervisor (all levels).

(e) Divisional Management Group = Division Director, Social Services Director, Regional Director, Social Services Consultant.

(f) Consultants (Headquarters)

(g) Unit Chiefs (Headquarters)

A

1. What is your job title

2. Are you: -

	Northblnd	Georgia
Practitioner	14	20
Supervisor/Team Leader	4	8
First Line Management	-	4
Middle Management	4	3
Senior Management	2	8
Consultant	-	10

3. Are you: -

	Northblnd	Georgia
Full time employed	21	50
Part time employed	3	3

4. How long have you been in your present post?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Less than 6 months	1	-
6 months to 1 year	2	6
1 to 2 years	4	14
2 to 5 years	7	10
5 or more years	10	23

5. How old are you?

	Northblnd	Georgia
18 to 21	-	-
22 to 25	2	-
26 to 30	4	6
31 to 40	6	27
41 to 50	7	12
51 to 60	5	8
61 or over	-	-

6. How long have you been in social Work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Less than 6 months	-	-
6 months to 1 year	-	-
1 to 2 years	1	-
2 to 5 years	8	10
5 to 10 years	2	8
10 to 20 years	8	20
20 or more years	5	15

7. (a) What year did you qualify as a Social worker?

   (b) If you have no social work qualifications, what year did you enter social work?

8. How long have you worked for Division of Family and Children Services/Northumberland Social Services Department?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Less than 6 months	-	-
6 months to 1 year	1	-
1 to 2 years	3	10
2 to 5 years	7	8
5 to 10 years	3	9
10 years or more	10	26

9.

Male	11	11
Female	13	42

B

1. How would you rate the performance of your Department compared with other Social Services Departments you know about?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	-	20
Good	-	14
Average	12	12
Reasonable	6	-
Poor	3	7
One of the worst	-	-
Don't know	3	-

2. Compared to other Social Services Department you know about how would you rate the employment policies and benefits of this Department?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	-	-
Good	2	32
Average	5	15
Reasonable	12	0
Poor	4	6
Very Poor	-	-
Don't know.	1	-

C.

1. How often do you feel that decisions that you make are in conflict with the expectations of your supervisor/team leader?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Always	-	-
Usually	1	-
Often	2	16
Sometimes	10	9
Rarely	8	28
Never	1	-
Don't Know	2	-
Don't Care	-	-

2. How do you rate the quality of work monitoring and supervision you receive from you supervisor?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	-	14
Good	5	14
Average	-	18
Reasonable	9	-
Barely Acceptable	4	-
Poor	4	7
Don't Know	2	-
Don't Care	-	-

3. In the Monitoring and Supervisory Process with your supervisor which of the following ingredients do you think are in evidence?*

	Northblnd	Georgia
Quality Control	5	20
Workload Management	8	20
Professional Development	7	16
Management Development	6	12
Accountability	12	32
Concern for Clients	14	27
Your Line Mgr's/Supevisors Self-Protection	11	23
Protection of the Department	9	28
To Ensure Your Compliance with Agency Policy	7	30
Your Own Self-Protection	6	17
Others (Specify)	-	-
Don't Know	-	-

*Not mutually exclusive

4. How would you rate the office physical conditions within which you work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	1	-
Good	4	-
Adequate	5	17
Satisfactory	-	-
Poor	14	36
Very Poor	-	-
Does not bother me	-	-

5. Since joining the Department, how much training for your job has the Department given you?

	Northblnd	Georgia
A great deal	-	-
An adequate amount	8	25
Very little	10	2
Minimal	4	-
Not Necessary	2	-

6. In your opinion how much discretion generally does your supervisor allow you in the planning of, and in the doing of, your work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Too much	5	-
Considerable amount	13	41
Small amount	4	12
Minimal amount	2	-
Inadequate amount	-	-
Sufficient as and when required	-	-
None	-	-

7. Managers/supervisors answer:-
In your opinion how much discretion judgment generally do you allow those for whom you are immediately responsible

	Northblnd	Georgia
Too much	-	-
Considerable amount	6	17
Adequate amount	2	3
Small amount	2	3
Minimal amount	-	-
Inadequate amount	-	-
Sufficient as and when required	-	-
None	-	-

8. Managers/supervisors answer:-
Do you think that those for whom you are immediately responsible see you as allowing them-in terms of discretion judgment?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Too much	-	2
Considerable amount	-	-
Adequate amount	3	19
Small amount	5	1
Minimal amount	1	-
Inadequate amount	1	-
Sufficient as and when required	-	-
None	-	2

9. If you had a complaint or problem about something connected with your job, to whose attention would you normally first bring it?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Your immediate supervisor/line manager	13	37
A person above your supervisor/line manager	-	-
One of your fellow workers	8	16
A departmental Professional Advisor	-	-
Union representative	-	-
Professional association	-	-
One of the top managers at State Office/ County Hall	-	-
A member of your family	3	-
A non-work friend	-	-
Other (Specify)	-	-
No one, would keep it to myself	-	-

10. When changes are to be made which affect your job, how often are you consulted?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Always	-	8
Usually	5	16
Occasionally	6	29
Seldom	9	-
Never	4	-
Not interested in being consulted	-	-

11. How would you rate the atmosphere in which you work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Very close and friendly	15	5
Distant by not unfriendly	9	48
Rather unfriendly	-	-
Very unfriendly	-	-
Difficult to assess	-	-

12. With regard to yourself and your immediate fellow workers, would you prefer:-

	Northblnd	Georgia
Closer relationships	5	5
The way it is now	19	48
Less relationships	-	-
None at all	-	-

13. How frequently do you have planned Supervision Sessions with your supervisor/line manager?

	Northblnd	Georgia
More than weekly	-	-
Weekly	-	15
Fortnightly	8	-
Monthly	5	10
Less than monthly	-	-
When you request it	-	17
When your team leader/supervisor requests it	3	11
Never	8	-

14. Practitioners answer only:-

How well do you think the following really understand the stresses you experience in doing your job?

	Your Supervisor/ Team Leader		County Director/ Area Director		State Office/ County Hall Managers	
	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga
Very well	3	12	2	4	-	-
Rather well	2	7	1	6	-	4
Reasonably well	8	-	4	10	1	7
Not very well	1	-	2	-	3	8
Not at all	-	1	-	-	3	1
Don't know	-	-	5	-	7	-

15. Supervisors/Teamleaders answer only:-

How well do you think the following really understand the stresses you experience in doing your job?

	Your Practitioners		County Director/ Area Director		State Office/ County Hall Managers	
	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga
Very well	3	5	2	3	-	2
Rather well	-	2	-	-	1	-
Reasonably well	1	1	2	5	1	6
Not very well	-	-	-	-	2	-
Not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-

16. County Directors/Area Directors answer only:

How well do you think the following really understand the stresses you experience in dong your job?

	Your Practitioners		Your Supervisors/ Team Leaders		State Office County Hall Managers	
	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga
Very well	3	3	2	3	-	2
Rather well	-	-	-	-	1	-
Reasonably well	1	1	2	1	1	2
Not very well	-	-	-	-	2	-
Not at all	-	-	-	-	-	-
Don't know	-	-	-	-	-	-

17. Social Services Consultants Only (No British equivalents)

	Your Unit Chief	County Directors	State Office Managers
	Ga	Ga	Ga
Very well	-	-	1
Rather well	-	-	1
Reasonably well	-	3	3
Not very well	4	7	5
Not at all	4	-	-
Don't know	2	-	-

18. State Office/County Hall Managers answer only:-

How well do you think the following really understand the stresses you experience in doing your job?

	Your Practitioners		Your Supervisors/ Team Leaders		County Directors/ Area Directors/PSW	
	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga	Nd	Ga
Very well	-	3	-	2	-	1
Rather well	-	2	1	2	1	3
Reasonably well	1	2	-	3	1	3
Not very well	1	-	1	-	-	-
Not at all	-	-	-	1	-	-
Don't know	-	1	-	-	-	1

19. What three things do you like least about your job?
1.
2.
3.

20. What three things do you like most about your job?
1.
2.
3.

21. How would you rate your opportunity for getting promotion within the Department?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	-	4
Good	5	15
Fair	6	17
Poor	13	11
Very poor	-	5
Don't know	-	1

22. How often do you worry about having too much to do within a normal working day?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Always	3	16
Frequently	10	15
Sometimes	8	17
Infrequently	-	2
Rarely	3	3
Never	-	-

23. How free do you feel about talking over job worries with your immediate supervisor/line manager?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Very free	9	26
Fairly free	9	18
Not very free	6	6
Not at all free	-	3

24. How would you rate the Department's action to reduce the personal risk to which you may be exposed in carrying out your duties?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Excellent	-	-
Good	6	-
Moderate	-	-
Satisfactory	2	11
Inadequate	-	42
Indifferent	6	-
Uncaring	5	-
Poor	5	-
Don't know	-	-

25. Do you ever feel that you do not have enough knowledge and skills to carry out your duties as you would like?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Always	-	3
requently	9	10
Sometimes	15	28
Hardly ever		7
Rarely	-	5
Never	-	-

26. How often do you find it necessary to bypass your immediate line manager and consult with a person above?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Always	-	-
Frequently	-	-
Occasionally	8	-
Rarely	7	18
Never	9	35

27. Does the Department expect too much of you?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Yes	15	20
No	9	27
Don't know	-	6

28. Do you feel the Department would support you should you make a significant error of judgment in the handling of a case or project?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Yes	3	15
Maybe	7	21
Never	5	-
Uncertain	9	17
Don't know	-	-

29. Do you feel that your supervisor/line manager promotes your interest in his/her dealings with senior management?

	Northblnd	Georgia
All the time	-	3
Usually	10	26
Sometimes	3	10
Rarely	7	5
Never	4	3
Don't know	-	6

30. Do you think the Department is active enough in training you to keep up-to-date with the changing developments in:-

	Northblnd	Georgia
(a) Social Issues		
Yes	6	18
No	15	31
No need	3	2
Don't know	-	2
(b) Legislation		
Yes	10	26
No	14	27
No need	-	-
Don't know	-	-
(c) Professional Practice		
Yes	9	17
No	15	31
No need	-	-
Don't know	-	5
(d) Management Development		
Yes	17	11
No	7	37
No need	-	-
Don't know	-	5
(e) Health and Safety Issues		
Yes	8	23
No	16	26
No need	-	1
Don't know	-	3

31. Practitioners answer only:-
Generally, how receptive are the following to your ideas and suggestions?

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Your Peers (Practitioners)			Your Supervisor/ Team Leader		
Very receptive	5	13		2	5
Reasonably receptive	6	7		6	7
Intermittently receptive	1	-		4	-
Cautiously receptive	-	-		-	8
Rarely receptive	2	-		1	-
Never receptive	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		1	-
Your County Director/ Area Director/PSW			State Office/ County Hall Managers		
Very receptive	-	2		-	-
Reasonably receptive	4	-		-	9
Intermittently receptive	-	8		-	-
Cautiously receptive	5	-		-	8
Rarely receptive	2	10		3	3
Never receptive	-	-		2	-
Don't know	3	-		9	-

32. Supervisors/Team Leaders/ answer only.
Generally, how receptive are the following to your ideas and suggestions?

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Your Team Practitioners			Your County Director/ Area Director		
Very receptive	2	-		1	-
Reasonably receptive	1	6		2	6
Intermittently receptive	-	-		-	1
Cautiously receptive	1	2		1	1
Rarely receptive	-	-		-	-
Never receptive	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		-	-
State Office/County Hall Managers					
Very receptive	-	2			
Reasonably receptive	-	5			
Intermittently receptive	1	-			
Cautiously receptive	1	-			
Rarely receptive	2	1			
Never receptive	-	-			
Don't know	-	-			

33. Social Services Consultants (no British equivalent) answer only:-

	Ga		Ga
Your Peers		Your Unit Chief	
Very receptive	1		-
Reasonably receptive	3		3
Intermittently receptive	4		2
Cautiously receptive	2		2
Rarely receptive	-		3
Never receptive	-		-
Don't know	-		-
County Staff		State Office Managers	
Very receptive	-		-
Reasonably receptive	2		-
Intermittently receptive	3		-
Cautiously receptive	4		3
Rarely receptive	1		2
Never receptive	-		4
Don't know	-		1

34. County Directors/Area Directors/PSW answer only:- Generally, how receptive are the following to your ideas and suggestions?

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Your Direct Services Staff			Your Peers		
Very receptive	-	3		-	3
Reasonably receptive	1	1		2	1
Intermittently receptive	1	-		2	-
Cautiously receptive	2	-		-	-
Rarely receptive	-	-		-	-
Never receptive	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		-	-
State Office/County Hall Managers (where applicable)					
Very receptive	-	-			
Reasonably receptive	-	1			
Intermittently receptive	1	-			
Cautiously receptive	3	3			
Rarely receptive	-	-			
Never receptive	-	-			
Don't know	-	-			

35. State Office/County Hall Managers answer only:-
Generally, how receptive are the following to your ideas and suggestions?

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Direct Services Staff			County Directors		
Very receptive	-	3		2	-
Reasonably receptive	-	4		6	1
Intermittently receptive	1	-		-	1
Cautiously receptive	1	1		-	-
Rarely receptive	-	-		-	-
Never receptive	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		-	-
Management Colleagues					
Very receptive	-	-			
Reasonably receptive	2	3			
Intermittently receptive	-	-			
Cautiously receptive	-	3			
Rarely receptive	-	2			
Never receptive	-	-			
Don't know	-	-			

36. Practitioners answer only :-
Generally, if there was a serious problem or difference of opinion in which you were involved, how much fairness do you think you would get from your:-

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Your Peers			Your Supervisor/ Team Leader		
A great deal	-	-		-	4
A fair amount	9	17		8	16
Little	3	3		2	-
Hardly any	1	-		2	-
Wouldn't expect any	1	-		-	-
None	-	-		2	-
Don't know	-	-		-	-
Your County Director/ Area Director/PSW			State Office/ County Hall Managers		
A great deal	-	-		-	6
A fair amount	6	12		2	9
Little	4	-		2	-
Hardly any	4	-		-	-
Wouldn't expect any	-	8		2	5
None	-	-		2	-
Don't know	-	-		6	-

37. Supervisors/Team Leaders/ answer only:-
Generally, if there was a serious work problem or difference of opinion in which you were involved, how much fairness do you think you would get from your:-

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Practitioners			County Director/ Area Director		
A great deal	1	5		1	5
A fair amount	2	3		2	-
Little	1	-		1	3
Hardly any		-		-	-
Wouldn't expect any		-		-	-
None		-		-	-
Don't know		-		-	-
State Office/ County Hall Managers					
A great deal	-	-			
A fair amount	-	6			
Little	2	2			
Hardly any	-	-			
Wouldn't expect any	-	-			
None	-	-			
Don't know	2	-			

38. Social Services Consultants (no British equivalent) answer only:-
Generally, if there was a serious work problem or difference of opinion in which you were involved, how much fairness do you think you would get from your:-

	Ga		Ga
Your Peers		Your Unit Chief	
A great deal	2		-
A fair amount	4		4
Little	4		4
Hardly any	-		2
Wouldn't expect any	-		-
None	-		-
Don't know	-		-
County Directors		State Office Managers	
A great deal	-		-
A fair amount	5		2
Little	3		1
Hardly any	2		4
Wouldn't expect any			-
None	-		-
Don't know	-		3

39. County Directors/Area Directors answer only:-
Generally, if there was a serious work problem or difference of opinion in which you were involved, how much fairness do you think you would get from your:-

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Direct Services Staff			Your Peers		
A great deal	-	-		-	-
A fair amount	-	1		3	4
Little	1	2		1	-
Hardly any	2	-		-	-
Wouldn't expect any	1	1		-	-
None	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		-	-
State Office/ County Hall Managers					
A great deal	-	3			
A fair amount	1	1			
Little	3	-			
Hardly any	-	-			
Wouldn't expect any	-	-			
None	-	-			
Don't know	-	-			

40. State Office/County Hall Managers answer only:-
Generally, if there was a serious work problem or difference of opinion in which you were involved, how much fairness do you think you would get from your:-

	Nd	Ga		Nd	Ga
Practitioners/Supervisors			County Directors/ Area directors/PSW		
A great deal	-	-		-	-
A fair amount	2	6		7	2
Little	-	1		-	-
Hardly any	-	-		-	-
Wouldn't expect any	-	-		-	-
None	-	-		-	-
Don't know	-	-		1	-
Managerial Colleagues					
A great deal	-	-			
A fair amount	1	5			
Little	1	2			
Hardly any	-	-			
Wouldn't expect any	-	-			
None	-	-			
Don't know	-	1			

41. Over the past 12 months, how many days have you been absent from work due to illness?

	Northblnd	Georgia
15+	4	11
10 to 15	-	5
5 to 10	4	12
1 to 5	11	2
None	5	4

42. Have you ever taken sick leave or annual leave because the job was getting you down?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Often	-	-
Occasionally	2	6
Sometimes	2	18
Rarely	5	20
Never	15	9

43. How satisfied are you with the extent to which your job leaves sufficient time for personal or family life?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Highly satisfied	3	7
Satisfied	11	28
Neither way	5	9
Dissatisfied	5	8
Very dissatisfied	-	1
Don't know	-	-

44. If you had another interesting and viable employment option, would you leave social work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Yes	5	23
Perhaps	15	16
No	4	12
Don't know	-	2

45. To what extent are you satisfied with the recognition you receive from your team leader/line manager when you have done a good piece of work?

	Northblnd	Georgia
Very satisfied	4	11
Satisfied	4	17
Neither way	7	12
Dissatisfied	9	9
Very dissatisfied	-	3
Not bothered	-	1

APPENDIX C

Centre for
the Study of
Organizational
Change and
Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 6941
(STD code 0225)

April 1987

Dear Practitioner/Manager,

INSTRUCTIONS FOR STRESS INCIDENT RECORDING INVENTORY

Would you please complete three of the attached Incident Sheets over the next 10 working days and return to me by (date to be inserted by interviewer.)

The aim of the Inventory is to further understanding of some of the everyday work stresses you experience and you consider significant to you.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Bob Gore
Researcher

Director
Professor I L Mangham

INCIDENT RECORDING INVENTORY Ref. _____

Please record on this sheet a specific incident or happening you felt/feel to be a Stress.

(Use only one Incident Recording Inventory for each reported stress.)

1. Date of incident.

2. Time of incident.

3. Location of incident.

4. Date you are recording incident.

5. Time you are recording incident.

6. Who is/or was present during the incident?

7. Describe the incident you are experiencing or have experienced.

8. What is/or was the stress incident?

9. Why do you think the stress incident is occurring or has occurred?

10. How are you feeling or were feeling about the stress incident?

11. What do you think could be done to prevent the stress incident happening again?

Centre for
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University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 61244
(STD code 0225)

APPENDIX D

Ref: _____

ORGANISATIONAL WORK STRESSES RESEARCH
NORTHUMBERLAND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
(FIELD SERVICES DIVISION)

This Questionnaire gives you (whether you are a Practitioner or Manager) the opportunity of sharing your feelings about aspects of the Field Services Division and your job.

1. The Questionnaire is designed for ease of completion. There is no time limit but you are advised not to become over-preoccupied with your answers.

2. This is not a test, there are no right or wrong answers. It is your views and opinions I am seeking. Please be as frank as you like.

3. Your complete anonymity is assured in the use and in the presentation of the eventual findings.

4. It would be helpful to have your completed Questionnaire returned to me in the envelope provided by Date to be inserted by interviewer.

Thank you.

Bob GORE
(Researcher)

7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ

Director
Professor I L Mangham

Centre for
the Study of
Organizational
Change and
Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 6941
(STD code 0225)

Ref._____

ORGANIZATIONAL WORK STRESSES RESEARCH
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND CHILDREN SERVICES

This Questionnaire gives you (whether you are Direct Services Staff or Manager) the opportunity of sharing your feelings about aspects of the Department and your job.

1. The Questionnaire is designed for ease of completion. There is no time limit but you are advised not to become overly concerned with your answers.

2. This is not a test; there are no right or wrong answers. I am seeking your views and opinions. Please be as frank as you like.

3. You are asked to answer all questions unless otherwise indicated.

4. Your complete anonymity is assured in the use and in the presentation of the eventual findings.

5. It would be helpful to have your completed Questionnaire returned to me in the envelope provided by . Date to be inserted by interviewer.

Thank you.

Bob Gore (Researcher)
1204-B Scott Boulevard
Decatur, GA 30030

Centre for
the Study of
Organizational
Change and
Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 6124
(STD code 0225)

Ref._____

Dear Practitioner/Manager

You will be aware that I would like to undertake a study of work stresses experienced by social work practitioners and managers in the Child Protective and Adult Services Units of the Division of Family and Childrens Services within the counties of Bartow, DeKalb, Hall and Muscogee.

The research project is part of a doctoral program in the School of Management at Bath University, England and will be supervised by Geoffrey Hutton of that University. I would very much appreciate your help with this study which will not only look at work stresses.

Should you decide to participate in what would be phase one of the project, you would be one of approximately 30 practitioners and managers to (1) be interviewed for a period of 1 1/2 hours, (2) complete a straightforward questionnaire, and (3) complete three recording incident sheets over a period of two weeks.

The decision to choose you was undertaken via a random sample process which did not have access to your name. Management has agreed that if you would like to take part, participation will take place during departmental working hours.

I can assure you that any responses you give in the questionnaire and interview will be strictly confidential to the research staff. You anonymity will be ensured throughout the study and in the final report to which you and your agency will have access.

You may wish to know that, in the second phase of the study, social work practitioners and managers from Hall County will participate in work-related discussion groups.

This research is a replication of that undertaken by me within the outreach services of Northunberland Social Services in England.

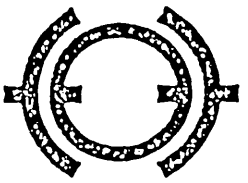
Please will you indicate on the attached slip your willingness to be a participant and return it to me in the envelope as quickly as possible. If you are willing, you will hear from me within the immediate future.

Yours Sincerely,

Bob Gore (Researcher)

Director
Professor I L Mangham

7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ



Centre for
the Study of
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Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 612
(STD code 0225)

Ref:

October 1986

Dear Practitioner/Manager,

ORGANISATIONAL WORK STRESSES RESEARCH

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Phase one of the study with its overall aims:-

> To further understanding of the organisational work stresses you experience in your every day work.

As you are aware you will be one of 16 practitioners and managers selected at random who will be divided into two discussion groups of 8 - a mixture of practitioners and managers.

Each group will meet separately with another researcher and me to discuss members' organisational work experiences in the Field Services Division of Northumberland Social Services Department.

You will be in Group which will meet on Monday, October 27th at in Social Services Department, County Hall, Morpeth for no longer than two and a half hours in total.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Bob CORE
(Researcher)

7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ

Centre for
the Study of
Organizational
Change and
Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 612
(STD code 0225)

Ref:

October 1986

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> To further understanding of the organisational work stresses you experience in your every day work.

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Each group will meet separately with another researcher and me to discuss members' organisational work experiences in the Field Services Division of Northumberland Social Services Department.

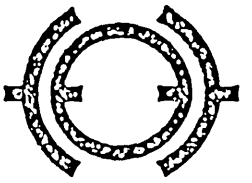
You will be in Group which will meet on Monday, October 27th at in Social Services Department, County Hall, Morpeth for no longer than two and a half hours in total.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Bob GORE
(Researcher)

7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle Upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ



Centre for
the Study of
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University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 6124
(STD code 0225)

Ref:

October 1986

Dear Practitioner/Manager,

ORGANISATIONAL WORK STRESSES RESEARCH

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Phase one of the study with its overall aims:-

To further understanding of the organisational work stresses you experience in your every day work.

The following explains the process of information gathering and related time spans.

1. You will be contacted by telephone by an interviewer to arrange a mutual time for you and the interviewer to meet.

2. After the interview of no more than 1½ hours you will be given:-

   (i) A Questionnaire which you are asked to complete and return to me within five days of receiving it.

   (ii) Stress Incident Recording Inventory, with instructions, will be given to you and you are asked to return these to me. The interviewer will identify the date for returning these.

I shall be writing to you again in the not too distant future, meanwhile I would like to repeat my appreciation for your willingness to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely,

Bob GORE
(Researcher)

Director
Professor I L Mangham

Centre for
the Study of
Organizational
Change and
Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
Telephone Bath 6124
(STD code 0225)

Ref: _____

October 1986

Dear Practitioner/Manager,

You will be aware that I am undertaking a study of work stresses experienced by social work practitioners and managers in the Field Services Division of the Northumberland Social Services Department. The study is being supervised by Geoffrey Hutton, School of Management, University of Bath.

I would very much appreciate your help in this study which will not only look at work stresses, but how these might be prevented or mitigated.

Should you decide to participate you would be, in the first phase of the project, one of 30 practitioners and managers to complete a straightforward questionnaire, be interviewed for a period of 1½ hours and complete up to four recording incident sheets over a period of two weeks.

The decision to choose you was undertaken via a random sample process related to your post number. Management has agreed that if you would like to take part, the completion of data collection will be undertaken during departmental working hours.

I can assure you that any responses you give in the questionnaire and interview will be strictly confidential to the research staff. Your anonymity will be ensured throughout the study and in the final report to which you will have access.

Please will you indicate on the attached slip your willingness to be a participant and return to me in the envelope as quickly as possible. If you are you will hear from me within the immediate future.

Cont'd.....

Director
Professor I L Mangham

You may wish to know that in the second phase of the study, 16 other social work practitioners and managers will meet in two discussion groups of eight. Membership of these groups, which will not involve you, will be drawn from a wider section of the Field Services Division.

Yours sincerely,

Bob GORE
(Researcher)

Bob Gore
7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ

Centre for
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University of Bath
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Bath BA2 7AY
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Ref: _____

October 1986

Dear Practitioner/Manager,

You will be aware that I am undertaking a study of work stresses experienced by social work practitioners and managers in the Field Services Division of the Northumberland Social Services Department. The study is being supervised by Geoffrey Hutton, School of Management, University of Bath.

I would very much appreciate your help in this study which will not only look at work stresses, but how these might be prevented or mitigated.

Should you decide to take part you would be participating in the second phase of the study. You would be one of 16 practitioners and managers who would be divided into two discussion groups of eight. Each group would meet separately with me and another researcher at County Hall for a period of 2½ hours to discuss your organisational work experiences.

The decision to choose you was undertaken via a random sample process related to your post number. Management has agreed that if you would like to take part, the group discussions will be undertaken during departmental working hours.

I would like to assure you that your views, comments etc., during the group sessions will be strictly confidential to the research staff. Your anonymity will be ensured throughout the study and in the final report to which you will have access.

Please will you indicate on the attached slip your willingness to be a participant and return to me in the envelope as quickly as possible. If you are you will hear from me within the immediate future.

Cont'd.....

Director
Professor I L Mangham

You may wish to know that in the first phase of the study 30 other practitioners and managers will complete a questionnaire and be interviewed by the research staff.

Yours sincerely,

Bob GORE
(Researcher)

Bob Gore
7 Queens Terrace
Jesmond
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE2 2PJ

Centre for
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Organizational
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Development

University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath BA2 7AY
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(STD code 0225)

ORGANIZATIONAL WORK STRESSES PROJECT

I am willing to take part in the project.

I am not willing to take part in the project.

*If you are willing, would you please write your name and telephone number below.

Please give your reply to Ms. Joyce Stringer.

Bob Gore
240 Adair Street
Decatur, GA 30030

Director
Professor I L Mangham

Note sent to all participants in the Georgia part of the study.

General Information from Bob Gore

Research Aims

To identify those organizational stress factors which social workers and their managers experience in their work situation.

Data Collecting Methods

A. (i) Face/face interviews - maximum 1 1/2 hours
(ii) Questionnaire - to be left with participant following interview and returned to me within 10 days
(iii) Incident Recording Sheets (CIC) to be left with participant following interview and returned to me within 2 weeks are for recording specific felt stress or similar feeling.

Sample - 30-60 managers/social workers within the Social Services Section (Adult and Child Protective Services) from the counties or Bartow, DeKalb and Muscogee

Randomly selected individuals will be invited to participate and asked to return to me an acknowledgement slip indicating their willingless to participate in the research.

B. Discussion Group(s) comprising 12-16 particiants (managers and social workers) from the Social Services Section (Adult and Child Protective Services), Hall County. Discussion group(s) duration 2 hours - to discuss participants work experiences and related issues etc.

The invitation to participate letter will
(a) briefly explain the purpose of the research,
(b) stress the independence of the research under the supervision of Geoffrey Hutton, reader in Organizational Behavior, University of Bath (School of Management) England,
(c) assure participants of individual confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research and in its findings,
(d) inform participants that they and their organization will have access to the research findings,
(e) point out the positiveness of the research in its efforts to understand the impact of organizational factors on their work functioning and related areas,
(f) inform participants that a similar study has been undertaken with the outreach section of a British social services department in the north of England.

NB While the overall research framework has been established, I very much welcome comments and views etc. which you consider would facilitate the research aims.